

STRUCTURES AND CLASSES IN THE GRAMMAR OF ASSAMESE

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by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis describes the grammatical structure of Assamese. Although this syntactic description is based on the system-structure theory developed by M.A.K. Halliday, some ad hoc modifications are suggested to deal with the facts of Assamese.

The introductory Chapter One describes the scope of the study and main phonological features of the language. It also describes the transcription used in the thesis.

Chapter Two describes the theory on which the thesis is based.

Chapter Three describes the features of the largest unit in the grammar, the sentence. Chapter Four is an account of the clause. Chapter Five describes the nominal group, and Chapter Six the verbal group. Chapter Seven is an account of the adverbial group. Chapter Eight contains an analysis of some sample texts, parsed to show the assignment of descriptive categories to formal items in the texts. The texts are accompanied by word-for-word translations. Some theoretical conclusions are drawn from the texts.

This thesis ends with a list of abbreviations and a bibliography.

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Assamese Language:

Assamese is one of the Indo-Aryan Languages derived from Magadhi Prakrit and its Apabhramsa dialects. Geographically it is almost completely surrounded by languages of the Tibeto-Burman and Thai-Kadai families. It is spoken in Assam, the eastern-most state of India. It is the mother tongue of nearly seven million of the people of Assam. Another two million people can speak and understand the language.<sup>1</sup> It is mainly spoken in the Brahmaputra valley extending from North-Lakhimpur in the east to Goalpura in the west. It is also spoken in the N.E.F.A. and Nagaland. Assamese is an anglicization of *oxomia*. It is one of the fifteen constitutionally recognized national languages of India. Dialectally Assamese can be divided into Eastern Assamese and Western Assamese. Eastern Assamese is considered to be the standard form of the language.

#### 1.2 The scope of the study:

This thesis is primarily concerned with exploring the syntax of standard Assamese. It falls into two parts. Part I contains a synopsis of Halliday's theory of systemic grammar. The following works have been consulted:

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1. These approximate figures are the census figures of 1961

- a) "Categories of the Theory of Grammar", Word, Vol. 17, 1961. Henceforth this article is referred to as 'Categories' or 'CTG'
- b) "Class in Relation to the Axes of chain and choice in Language", Linguistics, 1963 'Chain and choice'
- c) "Syntax and the Consumer", Monograph series, Vol.17
- d) Linguistic Science and Language Teaching, Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens.
- e) "Deep Grammar", Journal of Linguistics, Vol.2 No. 1, 1965
- f) Intonation and Grammar of British English Mouton, 1967
- g) "Options and Functions in the English Clause", Brno Studies in English 8
- h) "Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English", Part I, Part II, Part III, Journal of Linguistics, 1967-8

In Part II an attempt has been made to present the syntactic description of Assamese within the framework of Halliday's systemic model. The broad categories of the theory are used here as descriptive categories of the language. We have worked with controlled data of Assamese. We have arranged the material in terms of organization, although some loose bits of Assamese have not been accounted for. The theory we are following is certainly based on insights and observations. It is based on language universals. There is always the danger in following a particular model of language description that we may feel tempted to force the material and feed it into the model we are following. I have tried to avoid this in my work. Sometimes we have established ad hoc categories to show how the particular language we are dealing with really works. In doing this

though, we avoid doing any violence to the internal logic and consistency of the model.

### 1.3 Previous grammatical studies:

There are dozens of grammars on the Assamese language. Some of them were prepared in imitation of Sanskrit grammar.<sup>2</sup> On the whole the modern Assamese grammarians can be accused of Sanskrit bias. They have attempted to force Assamese into the pattern of Sanskrit. Some grammarians have prepared Assamese grammars in imitation of English grammars.<sup>3</sup> In these the attempt is made to apply the rules of English grammar to Assamese. Both of these approaches to Assamese grammar have prescribed rather than described the language. Their treatment has been pedagogical, features of Assamese being elucidated in terms of categories of Sanskrit or English respectively. Never before has the structural approach been applied to Assamese. In most earlier Assamese grammars, categories are often established on criterion of their contextual meaning. In this kind of approach, the analyst starts from the position that there are certain general 'meanings' which items 'denote' and that we can classify, or make distinctions between, items (or group of items) on the basis of differences in meaning. This view is unsatisfactory because any classification or distinction based on such criteria is likely to be imprecise. In the

- 
2. The important among the grammars in Assamese are:  
 Hemchandra Barua, Asamiya Byakaran  
 Satyanath Bora, Bohal Byakaran  
 Giridhar Sarma, Adhunik Asamia, Bhasar Byakaran

3. Among the Assamese grammars written in imitation of English by foreigners the following are to be noted:  
 Nathan Brown, Grammatical Notes on Assamese Language, 1846.  
 Prof. Nicholl, Manual of Bengali Language including Assamese Grammar, 1894  
 Tea Association, Assamese Language, Handbook, 1933

structural approach, the analyst starts from the position that certain formal contrasts can be observed between items and that these contrasts are regularly associated with certain differences in meaning.

#### 1.4 The present study:

The present study differs from any previous study in that it is consciously based on a theory. The aim of this grammar is to provide a system (or a set of systems) of classification, from the grammatical point of view, of the various elements of the language. These are sorted into groups on the basis of the way they combine. The categories have been established empirically from the observed structure of the language. They are defined and delimited in terms of the complex network of chain and choice relations into which the forms of Assamese enter. The aim of the thesis is to analyse Assamese rigorously in its own terms, to state its patterns, and to show how it works. The systemic theory has provided a framework within which all forms of Assamese may be placed. The description is an attempt to deal systematically with the language from the point of view of units larger than words and to do this syntactically rather than morphologically. However, morphophonemics is not all together excluded from the thesis.

#### 1.41 The corpus:

The body of data on which this syntactic description is based consists of three written texts of Assamese supplemented by the author's own usage as a speaker of standard Assamese. The examples cited in the body of the thesis have been selected with the 'clarity norm' in mind



rather, than the 'frequency norm'.<sup>4</sup> They are based on the author's idiolect.<sup>5</sup> The thesis shows that the framework works when applied to real discourse in a natural context. The analysis of the parsed texts leads to modification and perhaps the extension of the theory.

#### 1.5 Transcription:

The transcription used throughout the thesis is a phonemic one. The aim of the transcription is to represent the language satisfactorily as a basis for syntactic analysis. It is not a 'narrow' or phonetic transcription, but is designed to serve as a broad reading transcription appropriate to the purposes of the study.

#### 1.6 The phonological analysis of Assamese<sup>6</sup>:

A detailed account of the phonological structure of Assamese and its constituent systems is not within the scope of this work. We are assuming the following phonological features.

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4) For discussion of 'clarity norms' and 'frequency norms' Cf C.F. Hockett, A manual of phonology, 1955, pp 220-221

5) "...varieties according to users...and varieties according to use.... The variety according to user is a dialect; the variety according to use is a register"  
Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens, The Linguistic Science and Language Teaching, 1964, pp 77

6) Some descriptive work on the phonology of Assamese has been done. The following two books are important.  
Dr. B. Kakati, Assamese, Its formation and Development, 1941  
Dr. G.C. Goswami, An Introduction to Assamese Phonology, 1966

### 1.61 Vowels:

There are seven pure vowels in Assamese showing contrasts in tongue-position-front, central and back; tongue-height-high, high mid, low mid and low; lip position-rounded and unrounded. Back vowels are rounded, others not. The vowel phonemes are:

i		u
e		o
ɛ		ɔ
	a	

### 1.62 Distribution of the vowels:

All vowels occur initially, medially and finally. Nazalization is phonemic. The nazalized vowels show contrast with non-nazalized vowels. Vowel length is not phonemic. However the vowel in words of a single open syllable is longer than in others. Sequences of vowels may consist of two, three or four vowels. In sequences of two vowels, if the second vowel is relatively high, we consider them as constituting a single syllable. These may be called diphthongs. In sequences of three or four vowels, if the second or the third is a high vowel, then they constitute one syllable. They may also be called diphthongs. In sequences of three or four vowels, if the second or the third is a high vowel, then the first three vowels will constitute one syllable. These may be called triphthongs.

### 1.63 Stress:

Stress is predictable, hence it is non-contrastive and non-phonemic. In words of two syllables, the stress is on the first syllable. In words of more than two syllables, the stress is on the second syllable.

#### 1.64 Consonants:

There are twenty-four consonants. They include twelve stops, three nasals, five fricatives, one lateral, one trill and two semi-vowels. The consonants are:

Stops:        /p /   /b /   /t /   /d /   /k /   /g /  
               /ph/   /bh/   /th/   /dh/   /kh/   /gh/  
 Nasals:      /m /   /n /   /ŋ /  
 Fricatives: /s /   /z /   /x /   /h /   /ɦ /  
 Lateral:     /l /  
 Trill:        /r /  
 Semi-vowels /w /   /j /

The distribution of consonants is such that except /n/ and /x / which do not occur initially, all the consonants can occur initially, medially and finally. The semi-vowels /w / and /j / do not occur initially.

#### 1.65 Cluster:

All consonants can occur in medial clusters except /x /. No initial cluster is found except those formed with the liquids /r / or /l /.

#### 1.66 Intonation:

Assamese pitch patterns are not predicatable. They are contrastive, and therefore phonemic. In any utterance in Assamese, three meaningful choices may be made in intonation. They are:

- a. fall            (symbolized as: / \ / )
- b. rise            (symbolized as: / / / )
- c. rise-fall (symbolized as: / ^ / )

These symbols make up the intonation contour.

/ \ / represents retardation of tempo with a gradual fall in the pitch. Voice dies away slowly. This tune is used for complete statements, commands and special questions.

/ — / represents the retardation of tempo with sharp rise in the pitch. This tune is used for incomplete statements and general questions.

/ \ / represents terminal rise-fall. This tonal group is used to indicate the dominant effect of the emotional or meaningful attitudes. It indicates doubt, hesitation and implication. The following examples may elucidate the differences between the tonal groups:

Gopal to home has gone  
gopal ghoroloi gol / \ /  
Gopal has gone home.

gopal ghoroloi golne / — /  
Has Gopal gone home?

gopal ghoroloi golneki / \ /  
I suppose Gopal has gone home.

It will be observed from time to time in the body of this work that sentence-structure and speaker's attitude both play a very important part in determining intonation patterns and the other way round. The intonation system operates at many different places in the grammar. It is incorporated throughout the description of the language. Assamese intonation contrasts are grammatical; they are exploited in the grammar of the language.<sup>7</sup>

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7) "The systems expounded by intonation are just as much grammatical as are those such as tense, number and mood, expounded by other means".  
Halliday, Intonation and Grammar in British English, p.11

## Chapter II

### 2.1 Theory and procedures:

A general theory of linguistics is not a set of procedures or heuristic techniques.<sup>1</sup> It is a set of abstractions derived from a number of abstractions ~~of~~ <sup>from</sup> facts. One of the primary functions is to provide a framework of logically interrelated categories from which can be derived methods of description which show how language works. The aim of a general outline of linguistics is to provide a particular theory for each individual language as a special case of the general theory. Structural linguistics is a body of principles and methods which have arisen in the attempt to build it into a science. The methodology of any scientific subject is (I) controlled observation of data (II) analysis, generalization and prediction (=hypothesis) (III) further observation (=experiment), (IV) confirmation, modification or rejection of the generalization. Modern descriptive linguistics passes through these procedures and operates essentially as any scientific discipline does by working from data to theory and from theory to description, with the data totally accounted for in the description.

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1. "Linguistics is not a set of procedures. It is a theory, with derived methods relevant to the different levels". Review of Halliday's Categories C.L. Ebeling Archivum Linguisticum Vol. 13, 1961, p.94.

## 2.11 Theory, Description and presentation:

Halliday's methodological framework has a general logical status. He makes a distinction between linguistic theory and individual linguistic description. He provides what Firth called "a general linguistic theory for application to particular description."<sup>2</sup> Description is not theory. It is a body of methods derived from abstractions. Description consists of relating the text to the categories of the theory. The best description makes maximum use of the theory to account for a maximum of data. Theory and description reinforce each other. Theory controls description by providing a framework of categories into which the description can be fitted. Descriptive details motivate the linguist to look back at his theory. He refines and modifies his theoretical categories in the light of his observations and analysis of data. The validity of a theory is judged not only by its internal logic and consistency but also by its ability to handle specific language material. It is necessary to make a distinction between description and presentation. Presentation is the way the linguist expounds the description. For example the presentation of facts that is best for machine analysis is unlikely to be best for other purposes.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Firth, "Applications of General Linguistics"  
Selected papers of J.R. Firth, ed. by F.R. Palmer, p.130

3. "A theory derives its usefulness and validity from the aggregate of experience to which it must continually refer in renewal of correction". Firth: Synopsis selected papers of J.R. Firth ed. by F.R. Palmer, p.168

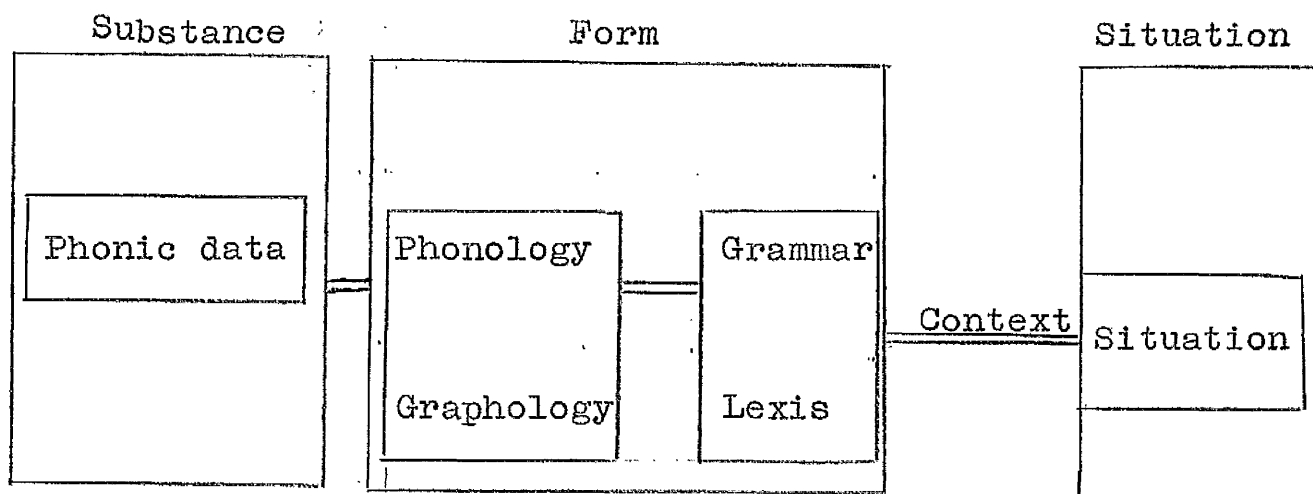
## 2.12 Linguistic theory

For Halliday linguistic theory has several subdivisions. The noises we make in speech are described in phonetics; the use of those noises to express formal contrasts are handled in grammar and lexis; and the relations of grammatical and lexical patterns to the various situations in which we use them are handled on the level of context.

Thus Halliday recognizes three descriptive levels<sup>4</sup> substance (phonology/graphology), form (grammar/lexis) and situation. Text is recognized at the level of substances. Substance is related to form. Form is related to external features. Form has two inter-related levels: grammar and lexis. Substance is interrelated to form through the interlevel of phonology if it is phonic substance. Substance is interrelated to form through graphology if it is graphic substance. Form is related to external features at the level of situation. Form is related to situation through the interlevel of context. A simplified framework of levels for linguistic description can be shown in the following tabular form:

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4. For detailed exposition of Halliday's linguistic theory, see "Categories of the Theory of Grammar I, p. 244; and The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching, pp. 10-20. These three aspects can be labelled as material, structural and environmental. They give rise to the separation of the three levels: substance, form and situation. They have been shown above diagrammatically.



### 2.13 Grammar

Grammar is one of these linguistic subdivisions. It directly concerns us here. Within the framework of this theory, grammar is defined as that level of formal patterning which deals with closed systems. Grammatical patterns are associated with stretches of speech. The patterns are internally structured and they carry contrasts in meaning. Grammar is concerned with choices of which there is a limited number to choose from. The distinction between closed systems and open sets of terms from which a choice is made, is crucial. In grammar the syntagmatic notion of structure corresponds to the paradigmatic notion of system. In lexis the syntagmatic notion of collocation corresponds to the paradigmatic notion of set.

### 2.14 Categories of the Theories of Grammar:

Halliday's creative contribution to general theory of grammar has been called 'neo-Firthian'. The theory



was first presented in Halliday's influential paper "Categories of the Theory of Grammar" and developed in his subsequent articles. Halliday's theory of grammar provides a framework of four interlocking and mutually defining categories: unit, structure, class and system, and operates with three scales of abstraction which relate the categories to one another and to the data. The scales of abstractions are: rank, delicacy and exponence. The framework with its four categories at the level of grammar and three scales of abstraction has come to know as the scale and category model. It is impossible to define a category in isolation. The categories are interlocked, and their meaning can be understood only with respect to the totality of the theory.

The relations among the categories do not involve logical precedence or priority.<sup>5</sup> The categories do not exist in rebus. They are ordered schematic constructs, frames of reference, a sort of scaffolding for handling events. Unit, structure, class and system are not inherent in the material. They are not hidden things which the linguist discovers, but are convenient tools which the linguist uses to account for how language works. Their concepts provide us a framework for describing the pattern of language.

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5. "Each of the four is specifically related to, and logically derivable from, each of the others. There is no relation of precedence or logical priority among them. They are all mutually defining". Halliday, "Categories of the Theory of Grammar", p.248.

## 2.21 Unit

Unit is that basic theoretical category which is set up to account for the varying stretches that carry linguistic patterns. It corresponds to the bit of chain which carries grammatical patterns. The units- from the largest unit to the smallest unit- are not layered in 'concentric onion-like layers'. They are related taxonomically. They are classifiable by their relative extent or size, such that one can be said to consist of one more of a smaller size. On this basis, we set up a hierarchy of grammatical rank. The units are ranked on a scale called rankscale; each unit consists of one or more than one complete member of the unit next below it. Unlike the relations of sequence, inclusion and conflation, the relation consists of involves going through the other categories of structure and class. It has been necessary to recognize five units "to account for the stretches that carry grammatical patterns".<sup>6</sup>

They are

Sentence	( $\Sigma$ )
Clause	( K ) <sub>7</sub>
Group	( G )
Word	( W )
Morpheme	( M )

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6. Halliday, CTG p.248

7. In CTG p.253 Halliday suggests that 'group' and 'phrase' are used interchangeably for the same unit. He prefers to call this unit 'group'.

"The units of grammar form a hierarchy that is a taxonomy"<sup>8</sup> That the units form a hierarchy means that they are a system of terms related along a single dimension with some form of logical precedence such as inclusion. To be a taxonomy a hierarchy must fulfil further two conditions: (I) "there is a constant relation of each term to the term immediately following it, and a constant reciprocal relation of each to that immediately preceding it; and (II) degree is significant, so that the place in order of each one of the terms, statable as the distance in number of steps from either end, is a defining characteristic of that term."<sup>9</sup>

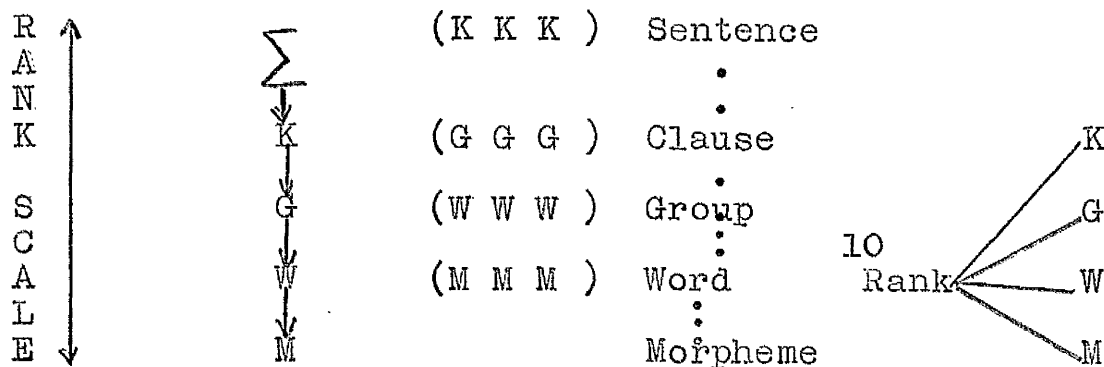
Diagrammatically we can arrange the units in terms of organization. The units form a hierarchy because they are arranged in logical precedence. The vertical scale on which the units are arranged is called rank-scale. We can arrange them in the following hierarchy:

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8. Halliday, CTG p.251.

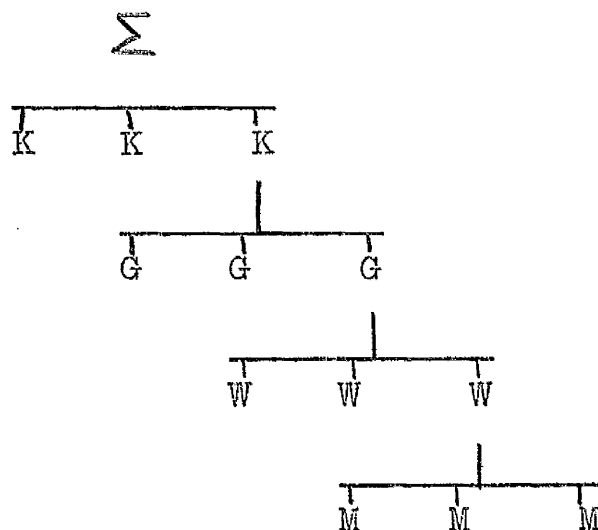
9. Halliday, CTG pp.248-249. The difference between a hierarchy and a taxonomy can be illustrated thus: an Assamese bamboo ladder is a hierarchy (one dimension with unequal spacing); an English ladder is a taxonomy (one dimension with equal spacing).

Highest Unit



Lowest Unit

The units form a hierarchy because they are arranged in terms of rank, from highest to the lowest, from largest to the smallest. They form a taxonomy as well because one unit consists of one or more of the other units immediately next below. Diagrammatically the units form the following taxonomy:




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10. It is extremely dangerous to try to equate Halliday's ranks with Lamb's strata or with Pike's levels. It is true that certain similarities exist between ranks, strata and levels. But endless confusion is the inevitable result of such promiscuous syncretism. However, tagmemic levels correspond fairly closely to scale-and-category ranks.

Grammar is strictly organized. The morpheme establishes the word, the word establishes the group, the group establishes the clause, and the clause establishes the sentence. The morpheme is to the word as the word is to the group; the group is to the clause as the clause is to the sentence. We have therefore the constant relation:

$$M:W = W:G = G:K = K:\sum 11$$

The constant relation is between one unit and the one immediately above or below it. This relation is that one unit 'consists of' one or more than one of the other units. In Assamese, each sentence consists of one or more clauses, each clause consists of one or more groups and so forth. For one unit to consist of other units, the smaller units may follow one another, interrupt one another, or one may be simultaneous with another.

## 2.22 Shunting:

The relation among the units on the rankscale is not a one way relationship. The theory embodies

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11. The formula  $A:B = C:D$  shows that all elements A,B,C,D are interrelated, and that relation between A and B on the one hand and C and D on the other is constant.

shunting (moving up and down the rankscale) as crucial to the interrelation of the units. "The description of the sentence cannot be complete until the description of the morpheme is complete, and vice-versa."<sup>12</sup>

## 2.23 Uniqueness of the highest and lowest Units:

Unit as a basic theoretical category is universal. However units of a language are peculiar to that language alone. These units are the stretches into which a language text is cut when grammatical statements are being made about it. They must be recognized afresh for each language. Theoretically any language must have a minimum of two units, for if a language has only one unit, there would be no rankscale, no structure, no classes, no system. In some languages we can establish higher ranks than the sentence, such as the paragraph and the discourse. A discourse is a unitary piece of speech behaviour. A discourse is not a haphazard succession of clauses,<sup>13</sup> sentences or even a succession of propositions about the same subject.

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12. Halliday CTG, p.270. Halliday emphasizes that when we describe a language, we start with the smallest unit though this has no logical precedence over any other unit. We can with perfect logic start anywhere in the rank-scale, since every part of the language structure is dependent on every other part. We can have a 'smallest' unit if there are other units larger and vice-versa. This involves a constant adaptation of each part of the description to every other part, a sort of shunting, until the whole is self-consistent.

13. A clause is a minimum sentence, and a minimum sentence is an independent clause.

Languages have various ways of linking separate items into an argument or conversation. The major aspects of this cohesion or connectivity in discourse are anaphora, temporal phrases and logic.<sup>14</sup>

In Assamese, however, we have accepted the sentence as a universal category. We have also accepted five units  $\Sigma$ , K, G, W, M in taxonomic order. One of the chief features of taxonomic arrangement is that once the largest unit is defined and structures set up for it, the remaining units are self defining. Sentence structure defines clause classes, clause structure defines group classes and so on. Identification of a clause can only be identified as a clause if the sentence is identified as a sentence and a group as a group up and down the rankscale. Our theory suggests a multi-unit grammar in which no unit is 'more unique' than any other. Although the morpheme is the smallest unit in size, it is no more or no less abstract than the sentence. However, the smallest and the largest unit have their distinguishing features. They are partially defective. The morpheme, being the smallest unit on the rankscale, has classes, but not structure, because there are no lower units to operate within it. The sentence, being the largest unit here considered, has structure but no classes, because it does not operate in the structure of a higher unit. The sentence can be described only in terms of

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14. The features of connectivity have been discussed in the Chapter The Sentence, section 3.11.

internal structure, namely its 'constituent features',<sup>15</sup> Thus the smallest and the largest units can be partially defined in terms of intralingual relations. Syntax (grammar outside the word) and morphology (grammar within the word) are thus interrelated. But they have distinct operations; the former refers to a downward movement on the rankscale and the latter to an upward one. Diagrammatically we can show the intralingual relation between the largest and the smallest units along the rank-scale.



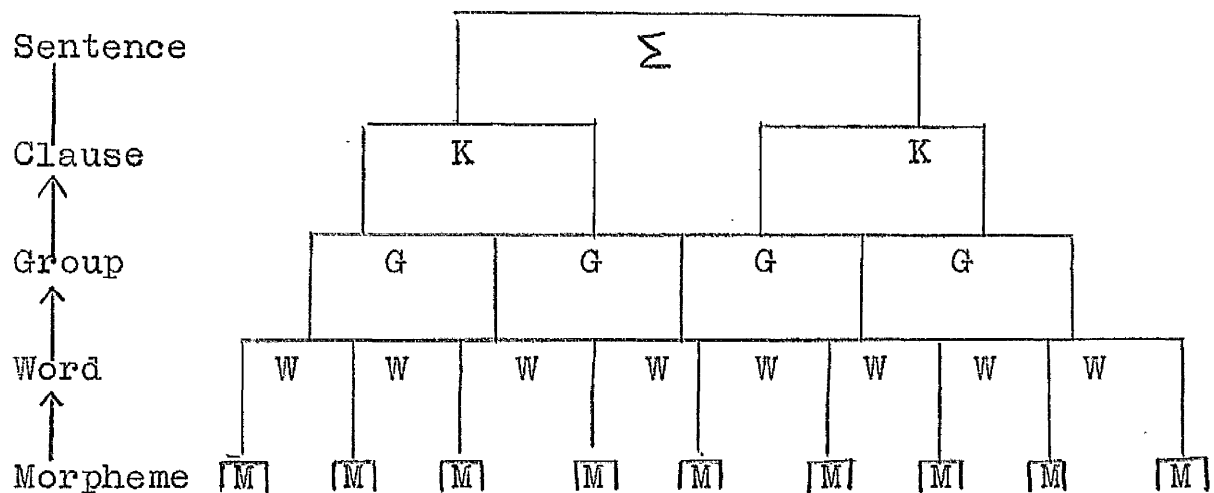
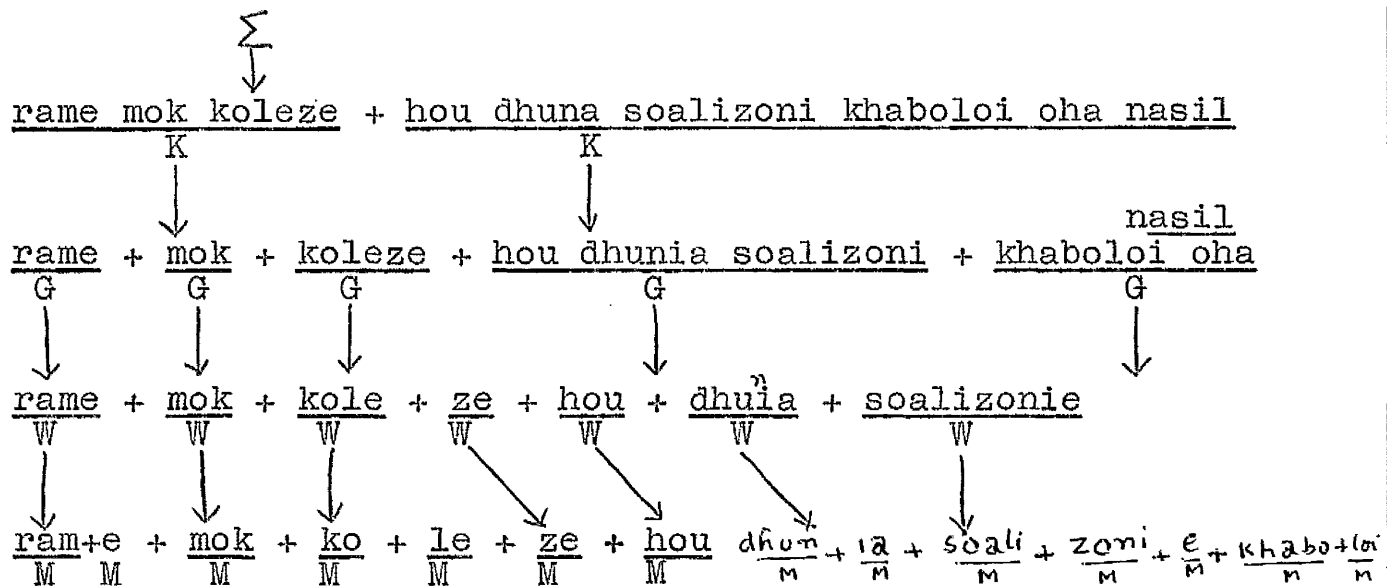
rame mok koleze hou dhunia soalizoni khaboloi oha nasil

Ram me said that that beautiful girl to eat come did not  
 Ram told me that that beautiful girl didn't come to the  
 party.

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15. "Sentence having no other analytic definitions, can be classified only by reference to constituent features" W. Hass, 'On defining Linguistic Units' TPS, 1954.





Assamese fits beautifully a rigid hierarchy which represents the taxonomic tree. A linguistic analysis is best made on a taxonomic basis in which units of a certain rank are the constituent elements of larger structures according to various set patterns, while themselves composed of arrangements of smaller units.

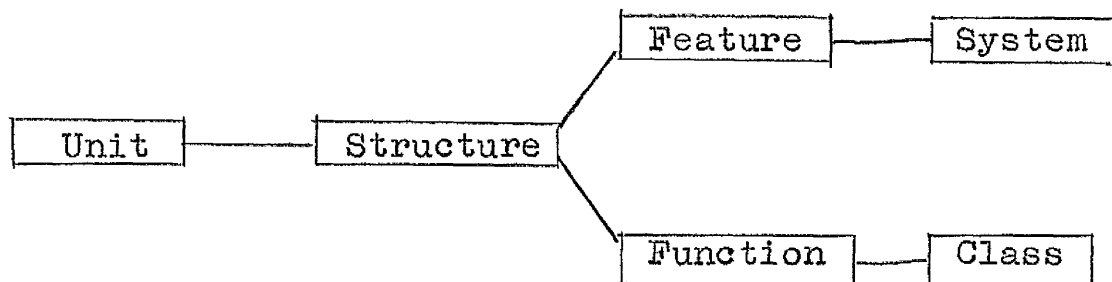
### 2.3 Structure

The category of structure is set up to account for the grammatical patterns carried by the units. Every unit (except the smallest, the morpheme) has a pattern of structure describable in terms of the next lowest rank. The structure of a unit can be made up of classes of the unit next below. For example, sentence structure is made up of clause classes, clause structure of group classes, group structure of word classes, and word structure of morpheme classes. Thus the structure of a unit may be said to be a distributional matrix or a frame of reference for the description of the classes of the unit next below. These classes operate as exponents of elements ordered in places in the structure of the unit concerned. Halliday has defined structure as "an ordered arrangement of elements in the chain relation"<sup>16</sup>. A structure is always a structure of a given unit. Each unit is characterised by a certain structure. A structure is a set of functions and a set of features. Structure, system, and class are interrelated. Each feature is realised in structure. Each function is manifested by class in structure. Structure is derived from system. System may equally be said to be derived from structure in that systems are set up for a given language according to the contrasts of meaning which are signalled through differences of structure in that

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16. Halliday: "Chain and Choice", p.7.

language. A unit has a structure because it is required by its features and the features are required by their functions. Diagrammatically we can show the interrelation among the categories:



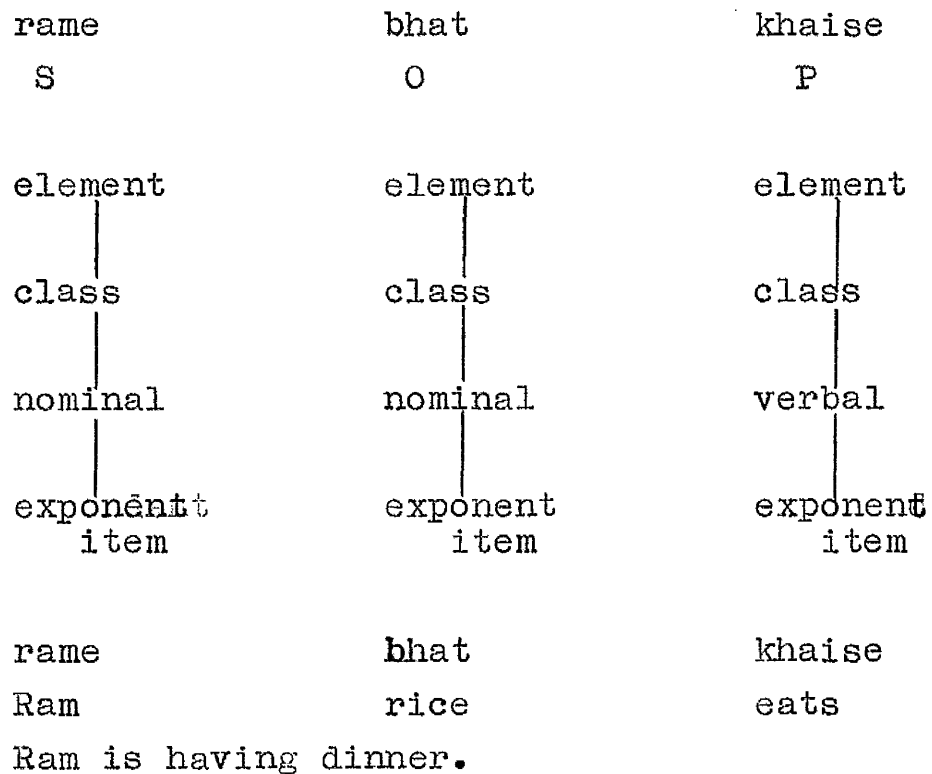
### 2.31 Elements of Structure

Structure consists of elements in interior syntagmatic relation<sup>17</sup>. The term element of structure is used for a constituent considered with regard to its function. One of the ways in which a feature may be realized is by the presence of certain elements of structure. The elements of structure do not occur arbitrarily relative to each other; each element occurs in certain position relative to certain other elements. The elements can be defined by their relative position in sequence as well as by their exponence. In Assamese clause structure, for example, the element S (Subject)

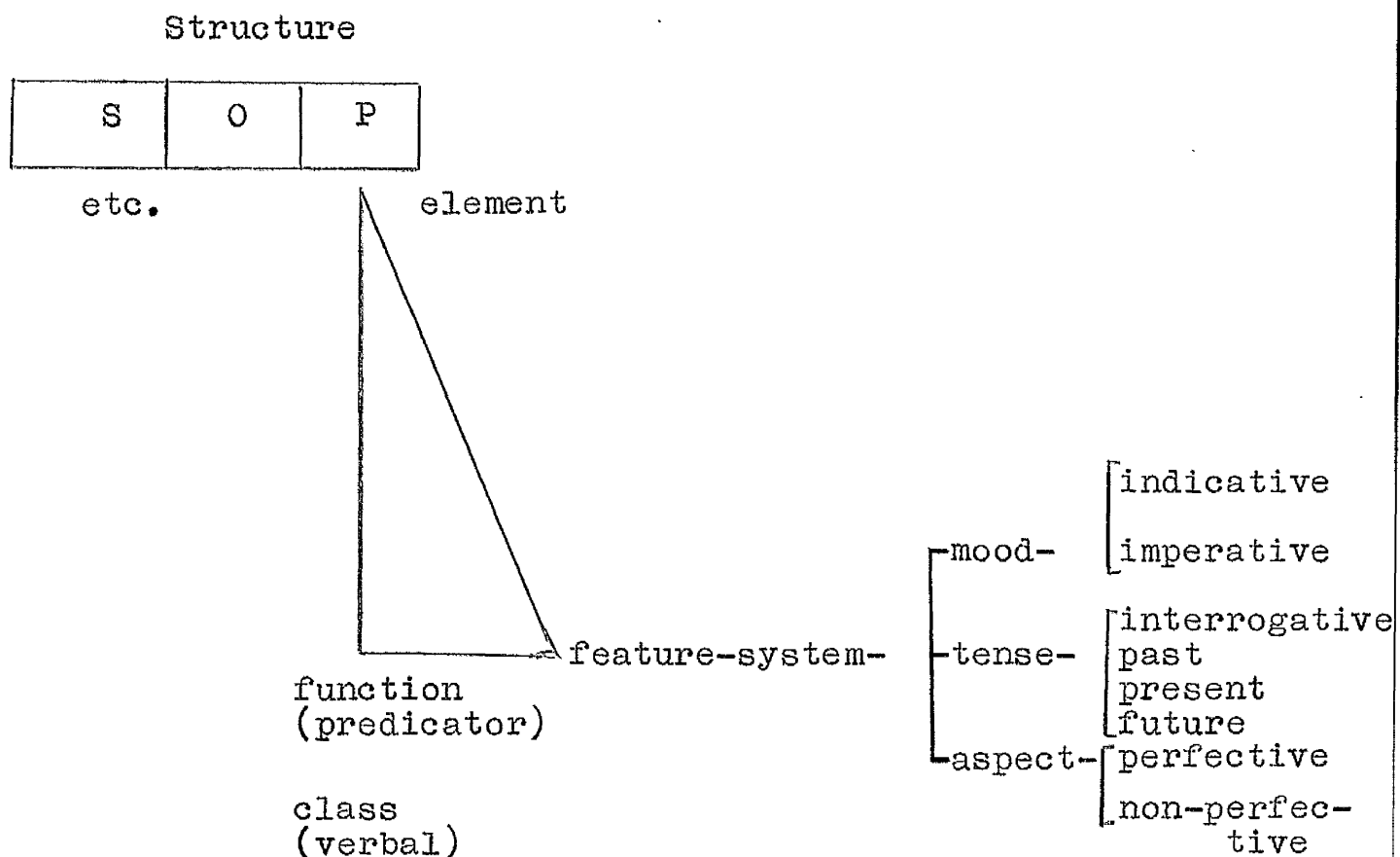
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17. "A structure is said to comprise elements or categories in mutual syntagmatic relation". Firth, "Ethnographic Analysis and Language" with reference to Malinowski's view. Man and Culture p. 107 fn.

is defined by its place in sequence relative to P (Predicator) whereas P is defined as that element which is expounded by the class verbal of the unit group. Take the following example:



Structure is a bundle of functions and each function has a set of features. Structure can exist only in systems and class is the starting point of any new system. Diagrammatically we can show the relationship between structure, function, and feature in the following way:



### 2.311 Obligatory and Optional

The elements of structure are in no sense permanent bricks juxtaposed in a permanent structure. This leads us to the question, how do we describe the sequence of functions in a structure? Some of the elements may be obligatory or nodal, others optional or peripheral. For example, in Assamese nominal group structure (m) h (q), the element h (head) is obligatory, the other elements m (modifier) and q (qualifier) are optional. In tagmemic theory, the nuclear element is marked by +, and the peripheral element is marked by  $\pm$ , so that the

Assamese nominal group structure can be written as follows:

$$\pm m + h \pm q$$

In systemic grammar, however, brackets ( ) indicate that the element referred to is optional. For example, the clause structure (S) O P means that the element S (subject) is optional.

### 2.312 Presupposition

Some elements presuppose another element but not vice versa, while others presuppose each other. In a sentence structure  $\alpha\beta$ ,  $\beta$  presupposes  $\alpha$ , but  $\alpha$  may not presuppose  $\beta$ . In Assamese clause structure SP, S presupposes P and P presupposes S.

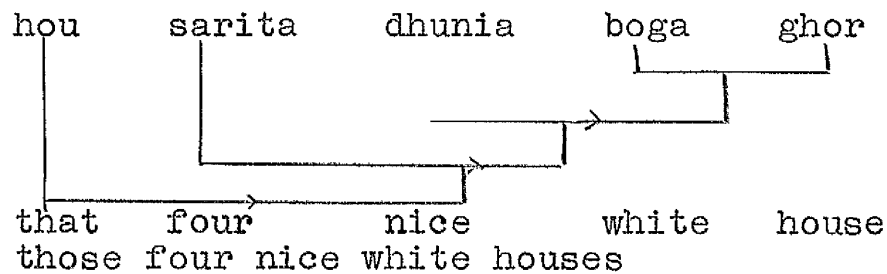
### 2.313 Co-ordination and Sub-ordination

Presupposition relations have two facets - Sub-ordination and Co-ordination. In the structure of a unit, some elements may stand in a relation of sub-ordination to some other elements<sup>18</sup>. The important thing about the sub-ordination relation is that some items are indispensable; if they are removed, the unit they form falls to pieces.

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18. "One member of syntagm is said to be subordinate to the other when the latter is characterized by such features as are also characteristic of the whole syntagm".  
E. Bazell: 'The Fundamental Syntactic Relations', p.11.

The dependent relationship between the elements is non-transitive, that is to say, the sequence of the elements may not be reversed. The elements are nested one within the other:



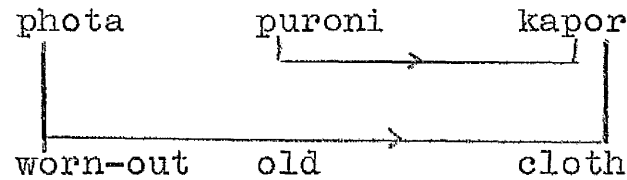
In this nominal group structure the fixity of the word-order is rigid. The principle of sub-ordination accounts for the non-interruptibility of the internal structure of the sequence of elements.

We cannot say:

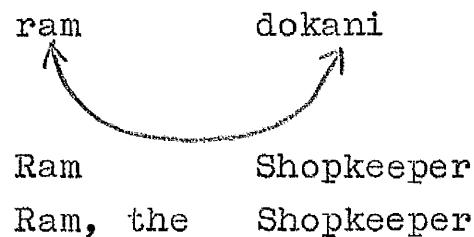
- \*hou ghor sarita dhunia boga
- \*sarita hou ghor dhunia boga
- \*ghor dhunia sarita boga hou

### 3.214 Additive and appositive

The element may be in a relation of co-ordination which may be either additive or appositive.

Additive

Here phota and puroni are co-ordinates<sup>19</sup> and both stand in additive co-ordination to kapor.

Appositive:

Here ram and dokani both stand in the additive co-ordination. The relation between the elements in co-ordination is transitive, that is to say, the sequence of elements may be reversed without any distortion of meaning.

2.32 Places in Structure

There are at least as many places in the structure of a unit as there are elements. In other words, every

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19. "In a syntagm A B, A and B are co-ordinate if the overall environmental ranges of both A and B are similar to that of the syntagm".

C.E. Bazell, Linguistic Form, p.33



structure is characterized by the number of places in it. It is, however, possible to have the same element twice in the structure of a unit. Every unit has one or more structures. For example, the primary structures of the nominal group in Assamese are:

<u>h</u>	manuh zone the man
<u>mh</u>	okho manuh zone tall the man the tall man
<u>hq</u>	manuh zone nize the man himself
<u>mhq</u>	okho manuh zone nize tall the man himself the tall man himself

Here h stands for head, m for modifier and q for qualifier. The theory allows for a structure of one place or of one element only. The only theoretical restriction is that each unit must carry at least one structure that consists of more than one place, otherwise one of the units would be redundant. If, for example, all words consist of one morpheme, word and morpheme would be one and the same unit.

2.321 Primary and Secondary Structures

A primary structure comprises the minimum number of elements necessary to account for the operation in a given unit. Primary structures are least delicate structures. They have the primary elements. For example, for the clause structure in Assamese, we have set up five primary elements: Subject (S), Object (O) Predicate (P) Adjunct (A) and Complement (C). From these we derive our primary classes. Progressively more delicate structures of the same unit are the secondary structures. Further differentiations yield more Secondary elements and therefore more secondary structures. The point to note here is that these are still structures of the same unit, not of the unit next below. We are at the same rank, but we have made a move in delicacy. For example, the primary nominal group structure is: (m) h (q). Splitting m into more delicate elements, we have the following secondary group structure:

Primary nominal group structure:        m h q

Secondary nominal group structure: d o e n h q

Here d stands for deictic, o for ordinative, e for epithet, and n for noun functioning as an adjective.

Example:

Primary nominal group structure:	<u>duzon</u>	<u>manuhe</u>	<u>nize</u>
	<u>m</u>	<u>h</u>	<u>q</u>
	two	man	himself
	The two men themselves		

Secondary nominal group

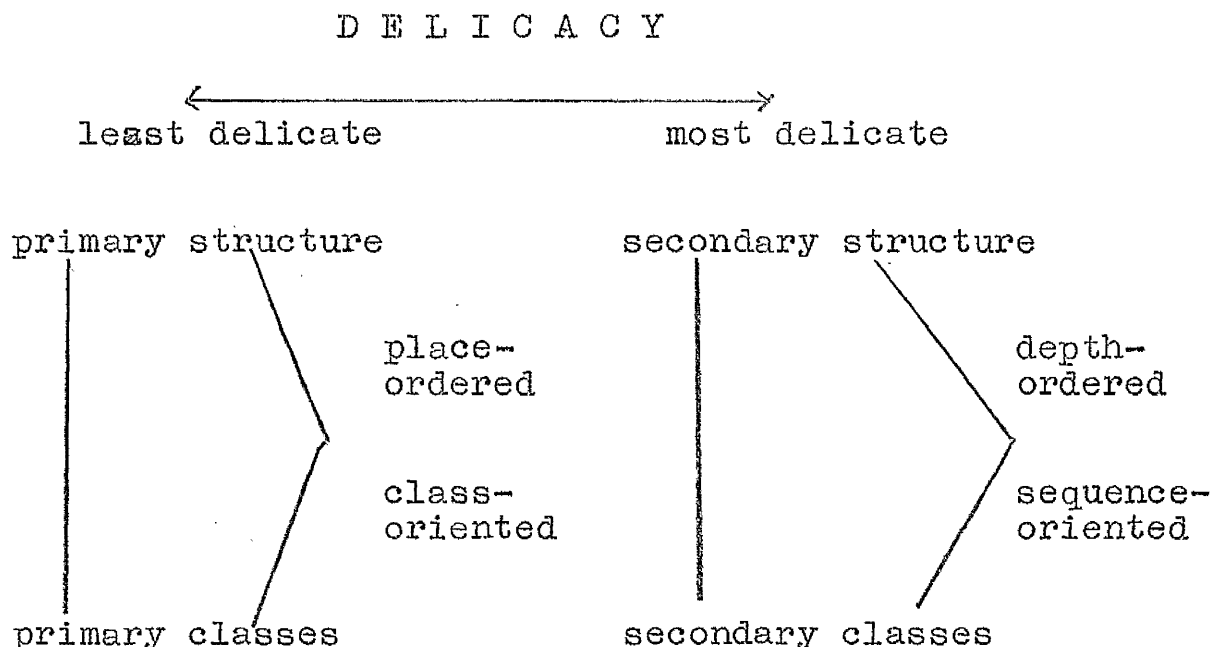
structure:

<u>hou</u>	<u>duzon</u>	<u>okho</u>	<u>inraz</u>	<u>mauhe</u>	<u>nize</u>
q	o	e	n	h	q

that two tall English man himself  
Those two tall English men themselves

#### 2.4 Scale of delicacy:

The idea of secondary structures leads us to the concept of delicacy. The scale of delicacy is central to our description of Assamese. As we have seen above, the primary structure comprises the minimum number of elements with the minimum number of places. Each element is defined with reference to class(es) of the unit next below. Primary structures are place-ordered and class determined. But a very detailed account is possible through a further consideration of subsidiary features associated with the main features. It is the concept of delicacy that can efficiently handle the increasing complexity in description. More delicate structures of the same unit are secondary structures. Secondary structures are depth-ordered and sequence-determined. Delicacy is the scale of differentiation, or depth in detail. The least differentiated structure and classes are spoken of at primary delicacy. As we move from an element to a sequence of elements we become more and more delicate, the network of grammatical relations becoming more and more complex. Diagrammatically we can show Delicacy in the following way:



Successively more delicate structures and classes may be described, all of which are also covered by the term Secondary. The more delicate the stage, the more likely the statements are to be statistical. Examine the following English sentence where a sequence of elements operating at q is repeated in depth:

The tall green pear tree in the garden in front of the  
                   m                  h                  q<sup>1</sup>                  q<sup>2</sup>house

near the bridge over the river is lovely to look at  
                   q<sup>3</sup>                  q<sup>4</sup>

From the concept of delicacy have arisen two linguistic features: choice-classes & chain classes (section 2.52) and place-ordered structures and the depth-order structures (section 2.41)

As Halliday points out, the scale of delicacy is a cline, that is, 'a continuum carrying potentiality of infinite gradation',<sup>20</sup> not in the same sense that infinite gradation is possible, but in the sense that there is no stopping places. Take the following examples:

hou tinizoni okho lahi dhunia oxomia soali bilaloloi zabo

S

P

those three tall slim beautiful Assamese girls to England will go

Those three tall slim beautiful Assamese girls will go to England.

Clause Structure:  $\overline{SP}$

Group Structure:  $\overline{m h q}$

Move in delicacy:  $\overline{d o e e e n}$

Let us have a move in delicacy in the adverbial group structure:

moi mor bhonizonik bomber pora zahazere ramor logot

S

O

A

dumah agote londonoloi pothialo

P

I my sister from Bombay by ship with Ram two months ago to London sent.

Two months ago, I sent my sister with Ram by ship from Bombay to London.

Clause structure S O A P

Group structure:  $\overline{dp|ip|cp|tp|lp}$

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20. Halliday, 'Categories' p. 272

dp stands for direction particle; ip for instrumental particle;

cp for collaboration particle; tp for time particle and lp for location particle. Here element A is repeated in depth in delicate details. The primary elements have been split into further secondary elements which have been filled in by functional secondary classes (section 2.51).

## 2.41 Recursive Structure

We may have class determined structures or sequence determined structures. If a structure is class determined, each place and each element is defined with reference to class(es) of the unit next below; in such a structure each element operates with a different value. If a structure is sequence determined, the elements of the structure are sequence expounded, not class expounded; the same element may be repeated recursively. It is difficult to find a purely sequence determined structure. The nominal group in Assamese represents a mixture of the two types. Halliday has made the distinction between place-ordered and depth-ordered structures. We quote: "By a place-ordered structure I mean one composed of a limited number of different elements occurring non recursively. Such a structure may be fully class-defining, in the sense that to each element corresponds a distinct class of lower rank: for example the clause structure "Subject + Predicator" with classes respectively nominal group and verbal group as in "my friends have arrived"; or it may be only partially class-defining, where two or more

elements are expounded by the same class but differentiated in sequence. In this type of structure, there is no constant relation between successive (or otherwise paired) elements; for example, in the structure "Subject + Predicator + Complement" (e.g. "John saw Mary", "my friend invited me") it is not true that Subject is to Predicator as Predicator to Complement ..... Language also exhibits a different kind of structure, the "recursive" or depth-ordered" structure. Here as the name implies, an element of structure or a combination of elements, is repeated 'in depth', a series of such elements (or combinations) thus forming a progression. It is doubtful whether one should set a theoretical limit to the degree of depth of recursion..... It is a characteristic of recursive structures that they cannot be used to differentiate classes"<sup>21</sup>.

The depth-ordered structures are recursive structures. We can have two types of recursion - embedding recursion and linear recursion. Embedding occurs when a unit is rankshifted to function as a constituent of a unit of its own or a lower rank. For example, a nominal group may be rankshifted to function as a modifier within another nominal group: Linear recursion may be either paratactic or hypotactic. Paratactic recursion occurs when two or more constituents function in the same relation in a structure, each being potentially independent of the other. A sequence of two

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21. Halliday, "Chain and Choice" pp. 11-12.

clauses may stand in co-ordinate relation to each other, for example. Hypotactic recursion occurs when two or more constituents occur in a recursive relation in which one is subordinate to the other. In all linear recursive structures there is potentially infinite repetition of the relationship. An example of linear recursion (non-rankshifted) can be quoted from Halliday's 'Chain and Choice':

He might have come if you had told him when you rang him up  
 $\alpha$   $\beta$   $\gamma$   
while he was packing before he went away.  
 $\delta$   $\epsilon$

Here the first term can be distinguished from the others. We can say that alpha element is expounded by the class independent clause. The class dependent clause operates at beta, gamma, delta and epsilon. Here the same element is repeated in depth.

Paratactic linear recursion involves items in univariate relationship, that is to say, relationship both endocentric and co-ordinative. Hypotactic linear recursion involves items in multivariate relationship, that is to say, relationship both exocentric and subordinate. They are discussed in full in the next chapter.

Take the following English example of embedding (rank-shifted) recursion:

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22. Here we follow Huddleston in describing recursion in the grammatical hierarchy in terms of embedding and linear recursion. R.D. Huddleston, 'Rank ' Depth', Language Vol. 41, 1965, p. 578





a structure immediately above".<sup>23</sup> Paul Postal<sup>24</sup> criticises Halliday for <sup>not</sup> specifying the restrictions on the operation of the rankshift. In fact, the restrictions are already built into the rank scale. Since the lowest unit lacks a structure, it follows that it cannot contain a rankshifted item. The highest unit can only contain a rankshifted item of equal rank. All other units can have a rankshifted item of equal or higher rank in their structures.

## 2.5 Class

Classes of units are set up on the basis of contrastive function in the structure of higher units. The structure of a unit may be defined in terms of classes of the unit immediately next below. For example, sentence structure is defined in terms of clause classes, clause structure in terms of group classes, group structure in terms of word classes, and word structure in terms of morpheme classes. Thus classes operate as exponents of elements ordered in places in structure of the unit concerned. The theoretical principle underlying the identification of classes is that the members of a class have the same potentiality of occurrence and pattern in the same way in the structure of items of higher rank. In the clause structure S A P, the members of the unit group which expound the

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23. Halliday, "Chain and Choice" p.13.

24. P. Postal, Constituent Structure: A Study of Contemporary Models of Synactic Description, p. 107

elements of structure constitute three classes of the group: Nominal Group, Verbal Group and Adverbial Group.

t	o	ghoroloi	gol
S		A	P
he		to home	went
He went home			

Here the class nominal operates at S (and can operate at O and C), the class adverbial operates at A and the class verbal operates at P. We must mention here that a class is always a class of a given unit.

## 2.51 Primary Class and Secondary Class

A rigid interpretation of this definition of class means that there are as many classes as there are elements of structure. Classes in a one-to-one relation to primary elements of structure are primary classes. Primary structures are differentiated into secondary structures, and the class of items at the place of each element of structure is then derived as a secondary class. There are as many primary classes as there are primary elements in the structure of a unit. If X, Y, Z are, for example, primary elements of a structure, there would be primary classes (a, b, c) of the unit next below expounding these elements. The theory does, however, allow for a single primary class derivable simultaneously from two elements of structure. The class nominal, for example, can fill in the functions

of S, O, and C. In other words, we can conflate the exponents of S, O and C into one primary class; nominal of the unit group.

## 2.52 Chain Class and Choice Class

Secondary classes are divided into chain classes and choice classes. The structure of any unit can be analysed in terms of elements ordered in places. The same element at different places in structure may yield distinct secondary classes. Chain classes are derived from secondary elements of structure. Chain classes stand in syntagmatic relation while choice classes stand in paradigmatic relation. Secondary chain classes enter into structural relations. Chain classes can co-occur; choice classes are mutually exclusive. The following examples may illustrate this distinction.

Primary Classes: Nominal group, verbal group,  
Adverbial group operating at  
the primary elements S, O, E,P,  
and A in clause structure  
respectively.

Secondary Chain  
Classes: deictics, ordinatives, epithets,  
nominals - operating at the  
secondary elements d, o, e, n  
in the nominal group.

Secondary Choice  
Classes: [ -indicative  
          [ -imperative [polar  
                          [non-polar] single  
  multiple

only One of these choices is made.

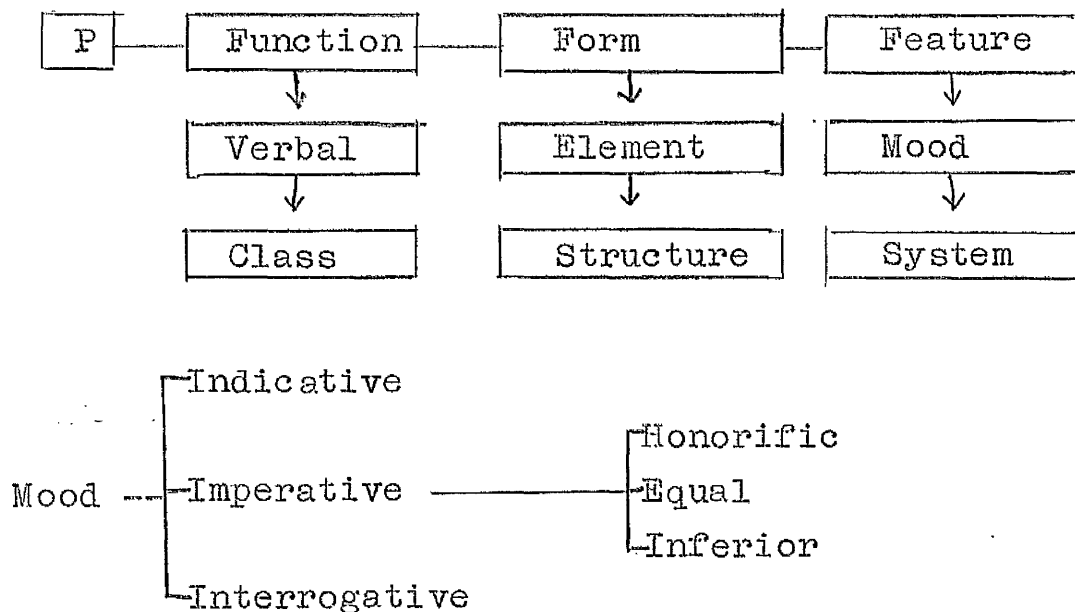
## 2.6 System

As we have noted earlier, a structure concerns the organization of elements in certain places. A place is characterized by order. The choice of an element in structure is limited to a certain class. Each class has certain features. The features form a interrelated system. They are arranged in a mutually exclusive set. We can define system as that abstract grammatical category which we set up at places in the structure of a unit to account for the occurrence of one rather than another from among like events. From this definition we can deduce that system gives value to the elements of structure<sup>25</sup> and that system is choice-oriented. Two basic concepts of system are pre-supposition and contrast. Every class is the point of origin of a system network which interrelates the features (properties) which are relevant to that class, that is, the meaningful contrasts which can be realized through the structure of that class. Features such as tense, mood and aspect are relevant to the verbal group, and features such as person-number-gender are relevant to the nominal group. Each factor system of features can

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25. "At the several places in a given grammatical structure one sets up appropriate systems to give value to the elements of structure". W.S. Allen, 'Zero and Panini', Indian Linguistics Vol. XVI p. 106. Halliday has defined system more precisely: "A system is a set of features one, and only one of which must be selected if the entry condition to that system is satisfied". Halliday, "Notes on transitivity and theme in English", Journal of Linguistics p. 37

be divided into more delicate systems. Each system is a set of mutually exclusive features, together with an entry condition which determines under what conditions those features apply. If the entry condition is satisfied, one of the features must be selected. For example, in Assamese clause structure the primary element P is expounded by the primary class verbal of the unit group. By making a move in delicacy, we break the mood system into indicative-imperative-interrogative, a three term mood system. We can choose only one of those three. If we choose imperative, by taking a further step in delicacy, we get a three term system of grade - honorific, equal and inferior. We can show this diagrammatically in the following way:



By setting up a system of mood, as shown above, we not only relate the primary choice classes

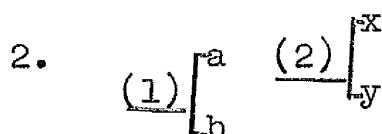
(indicative, imperative, and interrogative) one to the other, but also link the secondary choice classes (honorific, equal, inferior) to these. In other words, this set of secondary choice classes now stand in the relation of exponent to the primary element of clause structure. This idea suggests that at any given place in a structure, the language allows for a choice among a small, fixed set of possibilities. Thus language can be viewed as a series of 'system networks', each network representing the choices associated with a given type of constituent, clause system network, group system network, and so on. Systems are related in a system network. They may be simultaneous, so that a selection of features must be made from two or more systems at once. Alternatively, a system may be related through the scale of delicacy, where entry condition to one system is the prior selection of a term in another system, the second system being, therefore, dependent on the first and entailing more detailed specification. The following extract from Halliday's 'Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English', Part I, shows the inter-relation of system networks.<sup>26</sup>

1.— $\begin{bmatrix} a \\ b \end{bmatrix}$

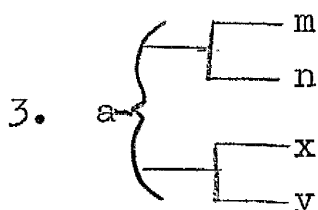
There is a system of features a/b (either a or b must be selected).

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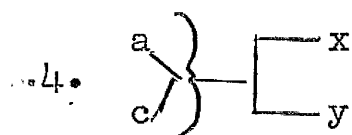
26. Halliday, "Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English", Part I.



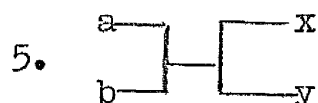
System (1), features  $a/b$  and system (2), features  $x/y$ , are ordered in delicacy such that  $a$  in system (1) is the entry condition for system (2) (if  $a$  is selected, either  $x$  or  $y$  must be selected).



Systems  $m/n$  and  $x/y$  are simultaneous (having the same entry condition  $a$ ).



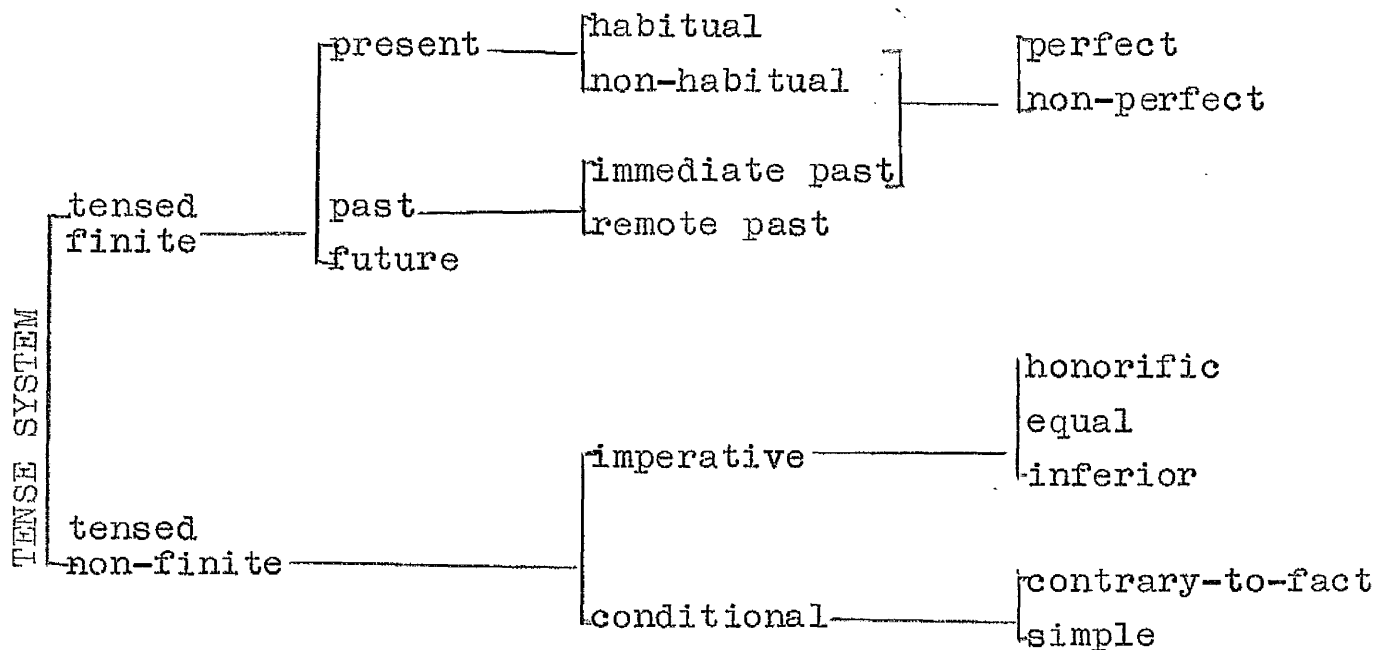
The entry condition for system  $x/y$  is compound, being the intersection of  $a$  and  $c$ .



System  $x/y$  has two possible entry conditions, either  $a$  or  $b$ .

The above notations have been used by Halliday. Square brackets indicate that an alternative choice must be made, one or the other of the systems or features linked by the bracket must be selected. Square brackets indicate an alternative entry condition. Curly brackets indicate that the systems linked by the bracket are simultaneous, and that features must be simultaneously selected from both systems so linked. The relation of systems in a network can be illustrated from the tense system of Assamese with the major clause as its entry condition in the following way:



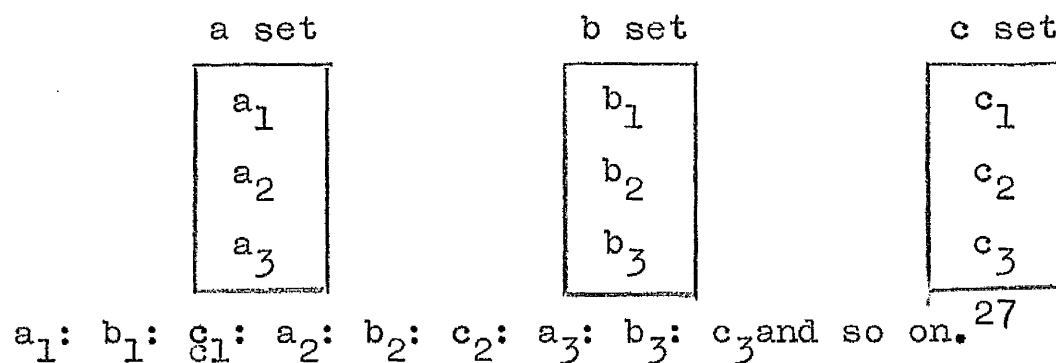


This system network of tense produces sets of secondary choice classes. We can choose only one of each. Systems may interlock and affect one another in various ways. Since classes which operate as terms (which have features) in a system represent the end-points of more than one relation, systems are generally multidimensional. It is a defining characteristic of a system that it cannot be a cline, that is to say, it cannot be a continuum of infinite possibilities.

## 2.61 Halliday's Systematic Grammar

In the early sixties Halliday's model was known as scale and category grammar. The reason for this label was that scale and category refer to the two basic ideas underlying the theory (as explained ~~above~~ ). Halliday has developed the theory in his subsequent articles. Out of his scale and ~~category~~ model has emerged

his concept of systemic grammar. The central idea of the systemic approach is that at any given place in a structure, the language allows for a small fixed set of possibilities (a system). System-structure grammar is another version of systemic grammar. The system implies proportionality. Given a system whose terms are a, b, c, the sets of their exponents  $a_1, a_2, a_3 \dots b_1, b_2, b_3 \dots c_1, c_2, c_3 \dots$  are proportionately related. This proportionality is based on the law of composition can be realized in the following sets:

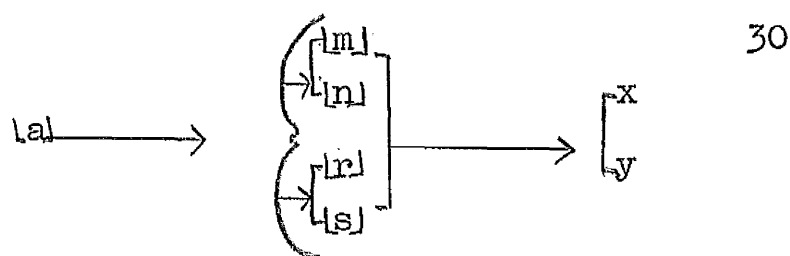


This holds good in showing a relationship as a product of a number of systemic relations. As the transformation is to a transformational grammar, so is the system to the systemic grammar.<sup>28</sup> The concept of delicacy is central to the systemic grammar. Delicacy

27. Adapted from Halliday's 'Syntax and the Consumer' p.14.

28. "There may be some similarity between the system in a scale and category grammar and the transformation in a transformational grammar." Halliday, Ibid, p.

can be illustrated with reference either to structure or to system. Delicacy is depth in detail and we can go as far as we wish and then stop. Each system represents "a dimension of potential discrimination"<sup>29</sup> in the grammatical description. A grammar with maximal delicacy represents an immensely complex system network. The system network is a combination of features with which it contrasts. The following diagram shows a sample network of relationships of features in a system:

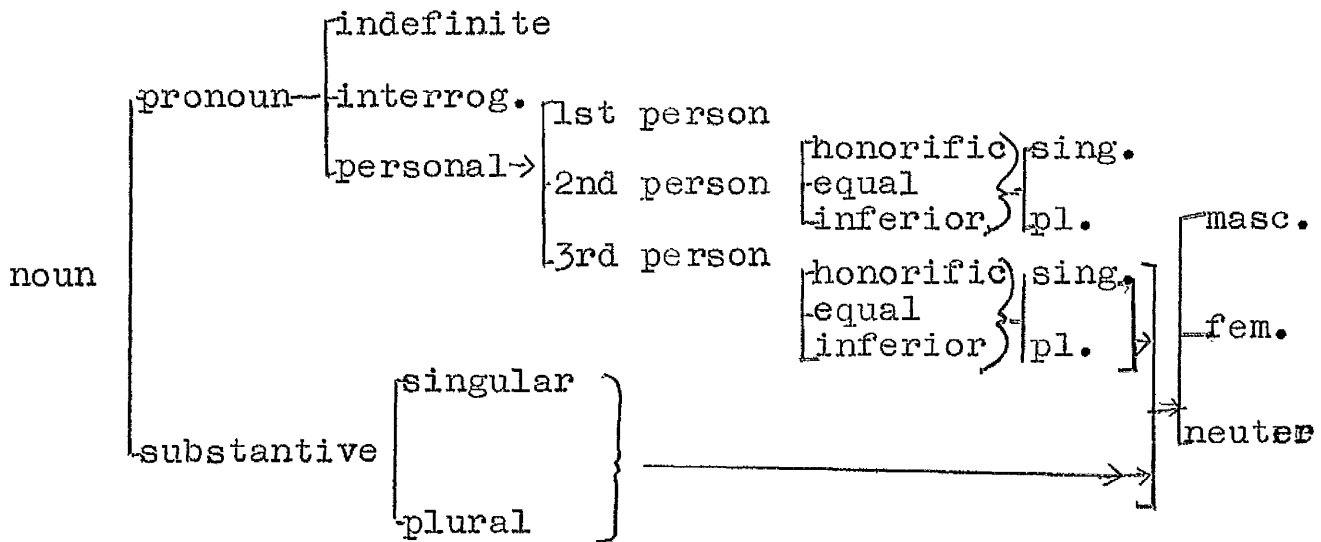


In Assamese the word class noun can be subdivided into the following sub-systems which represent a complex network of systems, arranged in order of increasing delicacy:

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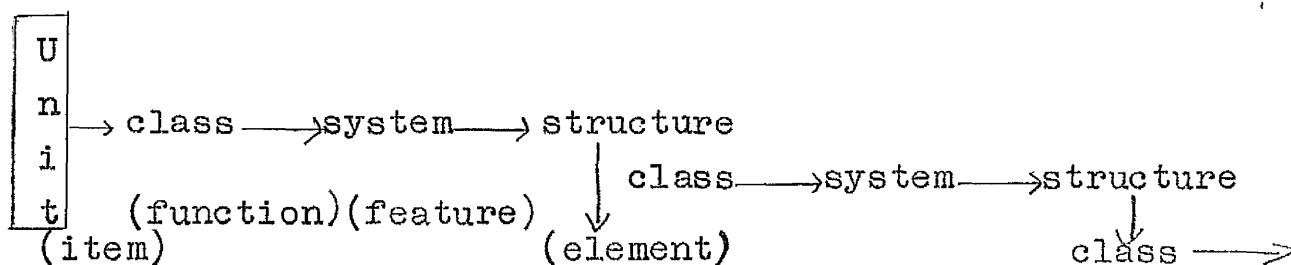
29. Halliday, *ibid*, p.20.

30. In this diagram, as in the rest of the thesis, curly brackets symbolize both/and, and square brackets symbolize either/or relationship.



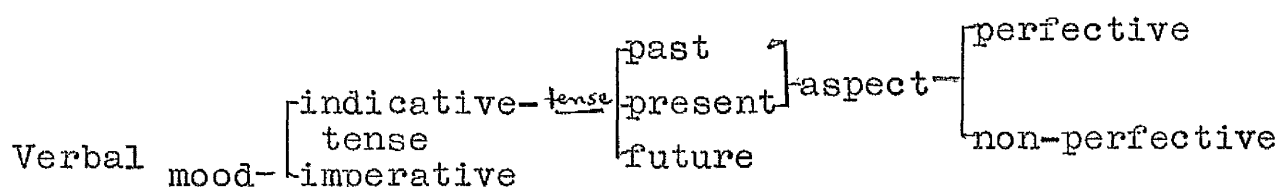
## 2.62 System in Relation to Structure and class:

System and structure are interrelated categories. Systems operate at 'places' in a structure to give mutually determined values to the elements of structure. Structures are unidimensional, linear, and horizontal along the chain axis. Systems are multi-dimensional, commutational, and vertical across the choice axis. The relation between structure and system is always an inter-rank relation. This is because each element is filled in by a class. The classes are set up on a functional basis. Each element of structure is expounded by a class which is the point of origin of a new system network. Structure, on the other hand, is derived from the system. That is to say, the selection of a particular set of features (options) determines a certain structure. Therefore class is the point of origin of a closed system with a paradigmatic choice-set. The following diagram provides a summary of the inter-relationships between class systems and structure.



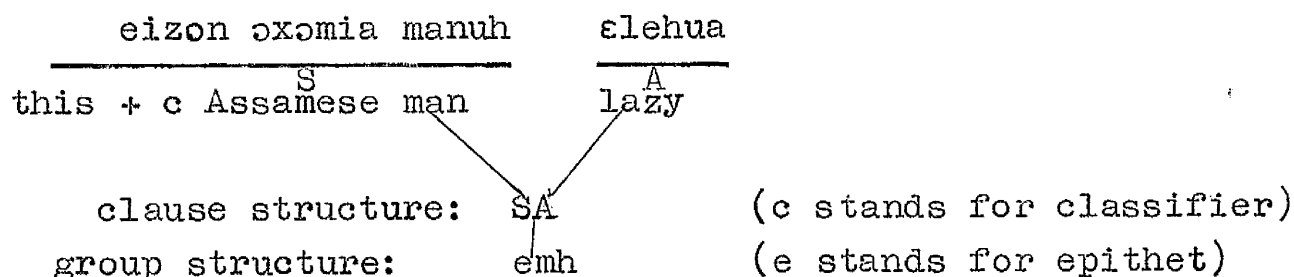
This diagram represents the system-network which embodies the three composite parts—elements, features, and functions. "Any selection of features formed from a given system network constitutes the systemic description of a class of items. Such a selection expression is then realized as a structure, the structural representation being fully derived from the systemic, each element of the structure is a point of entry into a further system network." This passage from Halliday's 'Notes on transitivity and theme in English I (p.37) summarises the interdependence of class, system, and structure. Each cannot stand by itself because they are interdependent. There is no logical precedence of one over the other two. Rather they are arranged in cycle; we can define their relation to each other and they combine with each other and give the systemic description of a particular item. An item has a particular structure because its features require it, because some of its features are selected by its functions and so on. The intricate relationships between structures, functions & features are presented by means of a system network. A system-network is made up of related systems, that is, systems having the same point of origin. Each element of structure is expounded by a class of a lower unit which is itself the point of origin of a new system.

For example, the element P is expounded by a functional class, the verbal group. The verbal group is in turn the point of origin of networks such as aspect. The system network is composed of all possible combinations of features which may be selected. We can diagram the Assamese verbal group functioning at P in the following way:



## 2.7 The Scale of Exponence

We have set up categories to account for the patterns and interrelations of grammar. Exponence is the scale which relates the categories to the data. We can link a category directly with a formal item as its exponent. Take the following example:



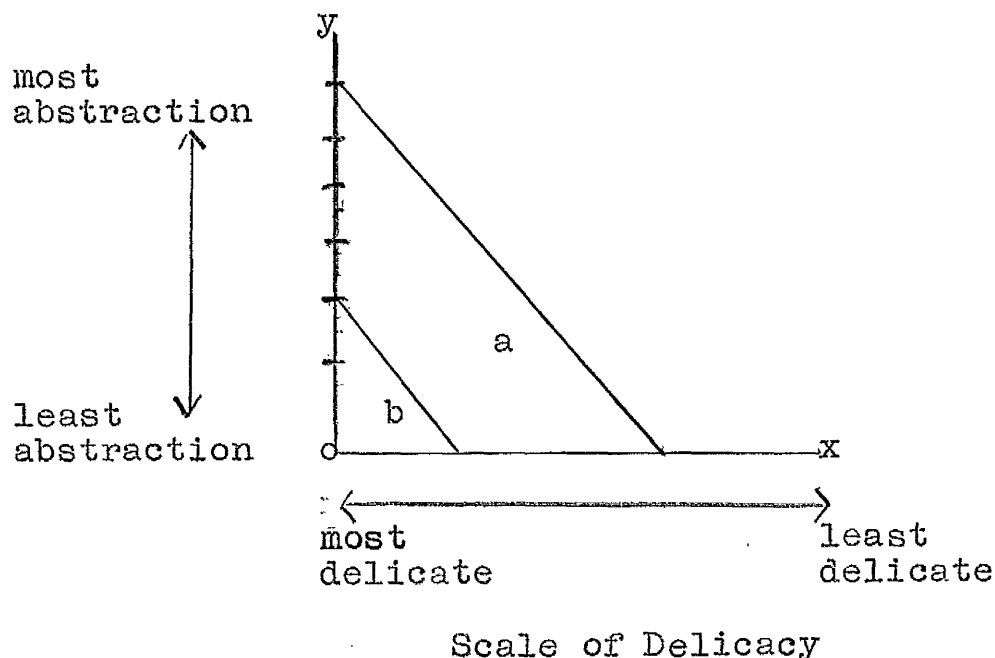
eizon oxornia manuh is an exponent of S (element) in clause structure. It is also possible to move step by step down the exponence scale, changing rank where necessary until the formal item is reached. For instance, an exponent of S in clause structure in Assamese is a nominal group. An exponent would be a string of word classes, such as classifiers, modifiers, nouns and so forth, so that ultimately we get eizon oxornia manuh. Exponence is the manifestation in substance and realization in form.

## 2.71 Delicacy and Exponence

The difference between delicacy and exponence needs to be clearly distinguished. Delicacy shows the range of structures and classes in greater detail. As the degree of delicacy increases, so also does the degree of exponence. A move from primary structure to secondary structure is a move in delicacy. A move from primary element to primary class is a move in exponence. Delicacy accounts for intra-category and intra-rank moves. Exponence involves inter-category relation and may also involve inter-rank relation. But the scale of delicacy together with the scale of exponence represents a definite area of meaning. The following diagram illustrates the way in which they work:

(a)      ezon lora  
           one + a boy  
               a boy

(b)      ezon okho d unia igraz lora  
           one + a tall beautiful English boy  
               a    tall handsome English boy



The horizontal scale along the axis  $ox$  is the scale of delicacy and the vertical scale along the axis  $oy$  is the scale of exponents. A move along  $oy$  means a move in exponents and a move along  $ox$  means a move in delicacy. The triangle  $a$  represents the area of meaning of the expression (a), and the triangle  $b$  represents the



area of meaning of the expression (b). The triangle a is bigger than the triangle b, because in the triangle a we get more items (exponents) and less depth in details (delicacy) than in the triangle b.

## 2.72 Exponence and Rank

Our aim in grammatical description is to make generalizations. Exponence is the scale which links our generalized statements with the actual occurrence in the data. Rank is the scale, as we have discussed above, which relates the units. Five units are recognized (sentence, clause, group, word and morpheme) and they are arranged hierarchically on a rank scale. Rank is often mistakenly equated with exponence. It is assumed that going down the rank scale is the same thing as going down the exponence scale. This confusion between the hierarchical ranking of units on the one hand, and the different steps on the exponence scale on the other is to a great extent due to our misunderstanding of the interrélations between the categories. When we move on from an element to class on the exponence scale, we are also moving down another step on the rank scale. This is not due to "any inherent indetermination between exponence and rank"<sup>30</sup> but due to special relations between the elements of a unit and classes of the unit next below. Both the scales of rank and exponence represent different dimensions of abstraction. The following examples may be taken to illustrate the point:

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30. Halliday, 'Categories', p.282.

a. soali zoni dhunia hobo  
           S          A          P

the girl beautiful will be  
 The girl will be beautiful  
 clause structure: S A P

b. ei duzoni dhunia soali  
      o   o + c      e  
           m                  h

This two + c beautiful girl  
 These two beautiful girls. /are—  
 group structure: m h

(Here o stands for ordinative, c for classifier,  
e for epithet)

The formal item <sup>31</sup> ei duzoni dhunia soali is an exponent of the nominal group, and its structure is: m h. This primary nominal group, when we have a move in delicacy gives us a secondary structure of nominal group: doce h (see pp.33 and 40). The categories have their value and their relevance in the possibility of being related to the data. The scale of exponence is the abstraction employed to indicate this relation. On the lowest end is the formal item. Therefore the formal item (ei duzoni dhunia soali) which is a manifestation in substance is less abstract than m h. m h is an element of structure which is expounded by data. So the formal item is both a manifestation in substance

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31. "The formal item is the boundary of grammar on the exponence scale". Halliday, 'categories' p. 271. The formal item may have substantial exponents, but this will not be a prolongation of the scale of of exponence in grammar. The nature of the abstraction is different and the formal item itself is now an abstraction from substantial features.

and a realization in form. Both differ in exponence but not in rank, since both belong to the rank group. On the other hand, SAP which is an exponent of clause structure differs from m h (an exponent of a group structure) in rank only. From the point of view of ranking the sentence and the morpheme represent the two end-points on the rank-scale but from the point of view of exponence the sentence stands in exactly the same relation to its exponents as does the morpheme.<sup>32</sup>

## 2.73 Cline in relation to scales of abstraction:

A cline involves a relation along a single dimension but no steps; it is a continuum of potentially infinite gradation. A cline may lead to indeterminacy because there is no standard set of stopping places applicable throughout the language. For each system network in the language, a separate set of stopping places on the scales of delicacy and exponence must be established. The stopping places on the rank scale on the other hand hold good throughout the language. Both the delicacy and exponence scales are clines. The rank scale is not. It is a hierarchy (a system of terms related along a single dimension that must involve some form of logical precedence). Language is an indeterminate phenomenon.

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32. "The relation of an exponent of the unit 'sentence' to the category of sentence is exactly the same as that of an exponent of the unit 'morpheme' to the category of morpheme". Halliday 'Categories' p. 282. As we have discussed above the unit is a pattern-carrier. Any element of structure of any unit is exponenced by a class which is itself the point of origin of a new system network.

We have both syntagmatic indeterminacy and paradigmatic indeterminacy. Indeterminacy is necessary because of the high degree both of accuracy and of generality needed for language to function. As we have discussed above, since the rank scale is a taxonomy, no upward rank skipping is permissible. It is worth noting that the tagmemic concept of hierarchy includes level skipping or upward rank-shift.

#### 2.74 The criticism of the concept of rank:

Both Paul Postal<sup>33</sup> and Peter Matthews have criticised Halliday's concept of rank. Halliday claims that a rank grammar is superior to a rank free grammar. "By a rank grammar I mean one which specifies and labels a fixed number of layers in the hierarchy of constituents, such that any constituent, and any constitute, can be assigned to one or other of the specified layers, or ranks."<sup>34</sup> The conclusions of Matthew's arguments are: (I) a rank-free constituency grammar is to be preferred to a rank constituency grammar; (II) all formulations of rank grammars are either theoretically insignificant or empirically unsound. Halliday defends the concept of rank on pragmatic grounds.<sup>35</sup>

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33. Paul Postal, Constituent Structure: A Study of Contemporary Models of Syntactic Description. p.107

34. Halliday, The Concept of Rank: 'A reply', Journal of Linguistics 1966, p.111

35. P. Matthews, 'The concept of Rank in Neo-Firthian Grammar, Journal of Linguistics (2.1) 1966, pp.101-109

(a) Rank defines a point of origin for structures and systems. A system, for example, operates at an item (an exponent of an element) in a given rank, and shows its relationships to other systems.

(b) On the structural axis rank is a generalization about bracketing. The interlocking relations among the constituents of a clause, for example, can be described formally in terms of part-whole relationship or part-part relationship. Part-part syntagmatic relations derive from part-whole syntagmatic relations. This way we get total accountability of each item at each rank. The demand of total accountability at all ranks has the merit of underlying simplicity and intuitive adequacy although at the cost of some surface complexity. Since description is textual, every item of it is accounted for at all ranks.

(c) Rank provides a point of reference for the description of grammatical levels. For example, the concept of rank helps describe the relation between the phonological and grammatical word. Rank delimits the range of intonation patterns and defines the environment of the word. A scale of rank is in principle what singularly branching implies. Both facilitate generalization about syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. Thus Halliday dismisses Matthews' criticisms of the concept of rank as "extra turns round the mulberry bush."<sup>35a</sup>

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35a. Halliday, 'The Concept of Rank', "A Reply", Journal of Linguistics 966, p.113

## 2.8 Modifications of Halliday's theory of grammar since 1961:

There are far reaching changes of emphasis in the theory since 1961 when Halliday wrote his major article, 'Categories of the Theory of Grammar'. The four universal categories (unit, structure, class and system) and the three scales of abstraction, (rank, exponence, and delicacy) have remained basic. The unit remains as a pattern carrier and is set up as the point of origin of the system network. The rank scale is now much less prominent. It held inherent difficulties, namely that, upward rank shifting was not allowed so we had to accept that non-expandable words such as linkers and sentence initiators were phrases. Halliday would now emphasize meaning as a basis for setting up classes. Now he defines elements of structure not so much as he first used to do (horizontally) but in terms of function in rank above (vertically). The article mentioned above implies that any given class can be either a chain class or a choice class. This implies that wherever we have a chain class we may have a choice class. All chain classes can be turned into choice classes, though not vice-versa. Much greater emphasis is now laid on choice classes. This opens up the possibility of generating utterances by computer. The sentence is now going out; anything above the clause is considered to be a clause-complex. Halliday considers language as a series of 'system networks', each network representing the choices associated with a given type of constituent. He mentions for example, clause system network, group system network, and so on. In this approach it is the clause system that

is taken as the point of departure in analysis, not the sentence. The approach is still developing. What is important perhaps is to note here that Halliday has tried to integrate information about structure with information about classification in a single model. This had led Halliday to examine the basic components of language transitivity, mood and theme.

## 2.81 Transitivity, mood and theme

In recent years Halliday has been inspired by the functionalist view of the Prague School. He has added a new dimension to his systemic theory by formulating the functions of language much as follows.

There are four functions which language must fulfil in order to meet the demands of communication. In any given speech situation a speaker will draw upon options for any or all of these functions; he may, for example, use language to impart information or to get across a certain kind of response. There are four functions of language.<sup>36</sup>

1) The ideational function provides for the expression of content, for the expression of events, objects and abstractions and relations between them.

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36. The components of language are discussed in the following works of Halliday:  
Halliday (1967-68) "Notes on transitivity and theme in English", The Journal of Linguistics (in 3 parts) 1967-68. (1968) "Options and functions in the English Clause" (mimeographed); (1969) "Clause types and structural function" New Horizons in linguistics 1970.

At clause rank this is the transitivity component. It is concerned with the types of process (e.g., action, state, and relation) with participants in the process such as actor, goal, and beneficiary. Circumstantial roles are expressed through items in adjunct relation.

2) The interpersonal function of language provides for definition and realization of the various communication roles brought into being by language itself. It represents linguistic interaction or speaker's attitude such as doubt or assertion. At clause rank it is the mood component.

3) The textual function provides for intertextual relations and discourse structure (including focus, contrast, emphasis, cohesion, identification and anaphora). It is concerned with the patterning at all ranks which makes a consecutive discourse distinct from a sequence of random sentences. At clause rank this is the theme component.

4) The logical component is concerned with such realizations as parataxis and hypotaxis of logical relations such as implication and inclusion. This is sometimes subsumed under (1). Clause is the domain of many of the principal options in the grammar of a language. The logical function is represented by the predication of the Single clause. In a full description each class unit would be the point of origin of simultaneous system networks relating features relevant



to all components. The components are therefore relevant at each rank of the hierarchy. The present description makes reference to the first three of these components but does not attempt to describe them systematically in detail. They are illustrated most fully at clause rank where the clause is the point of origin of networks relevant to mood, transitivity and theme. In the following chapters we will examine how far this theory is confirmed by the linguistic facts of Assamese. The facts are discovered by empirical observation, and are used to prove the validity of the theory.

## Chapter III

THE SENTENCE3.1 Discourse rank in Assamese:

The units are classifiable by their relative extent or size, such that one unit can be said to consist of one or more units of a smaller size. On this basis, we set up a hierarchy of grammatical rank on which we have placed five units for Assamese. In order of decreasing size, these are sentence, clause, group, word and morpheme. It might be possible to isolate some larger units than the sentence, such as the paragraph or the discourse<sup>1</sup> and to describe sentences within such a unit in relation to others. If we established the discourse as the highest ranking unit in the grammar of Assamese, it would in turn have no grammatical function in a higher ranking unit. In structure the primary elements of the discourse would be filled in by sentence classes. In the following two sections we provide a sample of what the structure of a discourse might look like if it were properly set up.

3.11 Structure of discourse:

The sentence classes establish the structure of the discourse. A discourse is a unitary piece of speech-behaviour. It may be a single utterance from one speaker, a monologue or a conversation between two or more speakers.

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1) Statistical work on grammar may yield a further unit above the sentence. It will then be possible to set up sentence classes, and account for sequences of sentences by reference to this higher unit.

It may also be a single play, poem, novel or paper. A discourse is not a haphazard succession of sentences, not even a succession of propositions on the same subject. There are markers of beginnings and ends. In Assamese there are various formal ways of linking separate items into a story, an argument or a conversation. One formal way is that of cohesion or connectivity. There are three aspects of cohesion in discourse: anaphora, time and logic.

1) Anaphora-back-reference to 'referent'. There are various types:

a) Pronoun refers back to noun:

Zodu ezon bhal lora/tar dentak  
Jodu one good boy his father

horu kalotei dhukai/hi bhalkoi porha-huna dore  
in children died he well study does  
Jodu is a good boy. His father died in his  
childhood. He studies hard.

b) Synonym refers back to noun or verb:

kexobemok mithai khaboloi dile/teo kintu ramok nidile  
Keshab me sweet to eat gave he but Ram didn't give  
Keshab gave me some sweet to eat. But he didn't  
give any to Ram.

2) Time - the sequence of events in a story may be diagrammed as a time-line running through the discourse. It is usually realized in the following ways:

a) Order of main verbs:

edin phuriboloi olai golo/amar gaakhon palogoi  
gaot sunilok log palo/teor logot kotha patilo  
oneday to walk out went our village got in  
the village Sunil met his in company words made  
One day I went for a walk. I reached our village.  
In the village I met Sunil. I had a talk with him.

## b) Temporal phrases:

edin abeli phuriboloi oloi golo/ olop  
 one day in the afternoon to walk out went/ after

pisote gear hatkhon paloi/ tar pisot  
 while of the village market reached/ after that

keitaman bostu kiniboloi khuzilo/  
 a few things to buy wanted/

One day in the afternoon, I went out for a walk.  
 After a while I got to the village market. While  
 there I wanted to buy a few things.

## 3) Logic:

The line of a story runs through a narrative, the  
 line of an argument runs through a chain of reasoning.  
 Even so, we can lose the thread of a discussion or conversa-  
 tion. The thread of sequentiality can be maintained by the  
 following cohesive indicators:

- a) Order of propositions
- b) Background/foreground mechanisms
- c) Connective particles:

aru-and  
 kintu-but  
 haihetuke-for that reason  
 zihetuke-since  
 zodio-although

## 3.1) An example of a discourse:

edin ratipua moi hui uthilo/ hat  
 one day in the morning I sleeping got up/ hand

mukh dhulo aru ekap sah khalo/ tar  
 mouth washed and one cup tea ate/of that

pisot phuriboloi olai golo/ olop pisot  
 after to walk out want/ after a while

gaor hatkhon palogoi/ bohut manuh kekhilo  
of the village market reached/ many people saw/

hatot manuh bileke kina besa korisil/  
in the market the people buying selling did/

mor hatot besi poisa nasil/ hseehe moi eta  
may in the hand much money was not/ therefore I one

am, dudal kolom aru tinikhon kitap  
mango, two pencils and three books

kinilo/ tar pisot moi ghoroloi ubholi  
bought of that after I to home return

ahilo/  
came.

One day in the morning I got up from bed. I washed my hands and face and had a cup of tea. After that I went out for a walk. I saw many people in the market. The people were buying and selling things. I didn't have much money. For that reason, I only bought one mango, two pencils and three books. After that I came back home.

### 3.12) The sentence is the highest unit in Assamese:

The term discourse is a broad term to cover all high rank verbal units from a single utterance which is not united with other utterances in the form of conversation, to an extended (unlimited in length) conversation unit. The boundary lines of discourse structure are not as clear cut as those of other ranks (clause or group for example). Further study may reveal the need of setting up the intermediate rank of paragraph.<sup>2</sup> But at present there is insufficient evidence to set up a paragraph rank. There is also insufficient evidence to contrast paragraphs and

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2) "Attention must first be paid to the larger elements of text-such as the paragraph". Firth, "Synopsis" p.18. "Studies of words in attested collocations emphasize the importance of the piece, phrase, clause, sentence, even of a closely knit group of sentences." Firth, "Synopsis", p.31

rankshifted discourses. Later on perhaps another intermediate rank between the paragraph and the sentence may be needed in order to be able to give a formal description of such syntagmatic features as connective particles. It seems therefore that any ranks above the sentence are loose in structure.<sup>3</sup> They cannot be established within exactly the same framework of categories of the theory. Until this can be done rigorously, the sentence remains the largest unit in Assamese.

### 3.2 The traditional criteria for the sentence:

The sentence has been accepted as a universal category. The traditional grammarians define a sentence as a group of words that express es a complete thought. This traditional definition is non-grammatical, because it is based on extralinguistic considerations and not on linguistic relations. There is another limitation to this approach. Traditional linguists postulate only two linguistic units: sentence and word. It would be difficult to operate a description with only two linguistic units because there would hardly be any room for shunting.<sup>4</sup>

#### 3.21 The formal meaning of the sentence:<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of language is to convey meaning. It is precisely because the linguist is interested in finding out how this is done, that he cannot start with a detailed

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3) Hill considers the study of discourse 'stylistics', A.A. Hill, Introduction to Linguistic structures, p. 406

4) "The theory embodies shunting (moving up and down the rankscale) as crucial to the interrelation of the categories" Halliday, CTG, p.270 (For details see p.20).

5) "Formal meaning is one part (the other being 'contextual meaning') of the total meaning of language." Halliday, CTG, p.275, footnote 74

consideration of meaning. If he does, he will be begging the question and learning nothing. Meaning is also bound up with the situation in which a given utterance occurs. We are interested in that part of meaning conveyed by the language, not so much in the meaning inherent in the situation. The linguist therefore begins from the side most accessible to him, form. Establishing structures on the basis of form, he may then turn to an examination of their functions or 'meaning'. The formal meaning of the sentence in Assamese, as in any other language, depends upon the total network of linguistic relations into which it enters. In fact the formal meaning of any given unit involves reference to other units. We define a unit by looking at the way it operates in the structure of the next unit above (morphemes in word-structure, words in group structure, groups in clause-structure and clauses in sentence-structure). We do not do this in the case of sentences since we have decided not to set up any unit higher than the sentence.

### 3.22 The structure of the sentence:

We have set up the sentence as the highest unit in Assamese. As such its structural description can be expressed in terms of elements of structure. These elements are arranged in a certain order and have relationships to each other. The syntagmatic relations between elements may be said to represent the "upper limit of systematization".<sup>6</sup> Clauses are the elements of sentences. Clause-classes establish the sentence-structure. Sentences are treated both linguistically and extra-linguistically.

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6) Halliday, "Grammatical categories in Chinese", p.182, T.P.S., 1956

### 3.23 Linguistic definition of the sentence:

Sentences may be recognized phonologically and grammatically. Phonologically there is silence before and after the sentence. Grammatically sentences are recognized in terms of clauses. The sentence as a grammatical unit may be established by two formal criteria:

- a) potentiality of occurring alone as a complete utterance
- b) the way in which the elements (i.e. clause-classes) make up the structure of the sentence.

In the delimitation of the exponents of the sentence within our texts we shall do a bit of 'squinting',<sup>7</sup> that is, we shall draw evidence from other levels, namely, phonology and graphology. In spoken Assamese we can draw evidence from phonology.

#### 3.231 a) Phonology:

Two sentences:

moi      bhat      khalo/  
 -           -           \

I rice have eaten/  
 I had my meal.

teo      bhat      khoa      nai/  
 -           -           -           \

he rice has eaten not  
 He hadn't had his meal.

One sentence:

/teo      zodio      bhat      khoanai      moi      bhat      khalo/  
 -           -           -           -           -           -           \

he although rice hadn't eat I rice have eaten  
 I had my dinner although he hadn't had his.

---

7) Halliday, C.T.G. P.270.



The tone group marks the beginning and end of the sentence.

b) Graphology:

In written texts sentences may be delimited by purely graphic criteria. Any stretch of a written text between a blank and any of the following punctuation marks is a sentence:-

Assamese punctuation marks:<sup>8</sup>

1. dari (full stop)      ।
2. prosnabodhok (mark of interrogation) ?
3. bhabbodhok (mark of exclamation) !
4. semikolon (mark of potential pause) ;

Examine the punctuation marks in the following narrative which has been written in Assamese orthography:-

এদিন আতিথ্য-ঘৰে- অতি ডাঠলৈ ।  
 প্ৰায় কৰিলে, ২৩-মুখ- ঘৰলৈ  
 আৰু আতিথ্য-ঘৰে- আৰু কামৰূপৰ ঘৰলৈ ।  
 তেওঁ গৈছিল আৰু ক'বলৈ, "মা, ৪৫ হৈছে ?"  
 ঘৰে ক'লে, "৪৫-ওঁৰ-২২-মুখ- ঘৰে ।"  
 ঘৰে- আৰু ক'বলৈ, "ওঁৰ-২২-মুখ- ঘৰে !"  
 গৈছিল আৰু ?"

---

8) The punctuation system is almost wholly borrowed from English. An important difference is (।) read as dari which is used instead of the period, and much more frequently than the period would be in English.

(One morning I got up from bed. I exercised, washed my hands and face, and read the morning newspaper. After that, I asked my mother whether breakfast was ready. My mother said that it wasn't ready yet. I was surprised and said to her, "It isn't ready yet! But why?" )

In the above narrative in Assamese orthography, any stretch between two punctuation marks is a sentence.

In theory the sentence is unlimited in extent; and it is considered to go on until it is marked as closed. We can quote Halliday in order to make our position clear on this point. "As in written text in modern Chinese or in European languages, the sentence is taken to ~~the~~ extend until marked as closed as possible by a full stop."<sup>9</sup>

### 3.24 Extra-linguistic definition of the sentence:

All sentences are grammatically free. In this connection Halliday has remarked: "Since no unit has been set up greater than the sentence having structure in which the forms operating are sentence classes, all sentences are grammatically free".<sup>10</sup> Although all sentences are grammatically free, some of them are not contextually free.<sup>11</sup>

Extra-linguistically, sentences may be grouped into context-free and context bound sentences. Those which cannot be opening sentences in a text, i.e. those that need a previous utterance, are termed context-bound. They are fragmentary and are replaceable by context-free sentences, of which they form a part.

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9) Halliday, The Language of the Chinese Secret History of Mongols, p.51, fn.1

10) Halliday, "Grammatical categories in Chinese", p.184, TPS, 1956

11) The term context is used here in the Firthian sense and refers to 'analytic relations set up between parts of a text'. It forms part of a wider 'set of situational relations.' Viz. context of situation. Firth, 'Synopsis', p.5

It must be emphasized that the terms context-free sentence and context-bound sentence are not synonymous with independent and dependent clauses respectively. While the former are extra-linguistic terms, the latter are grammatical terms. Context-free and context-bound sentences may occur by themselves, but dependent clauses may not do so. They may occur only with the independent clauses.

### 3.241 Context-free sentences:

All context-free sentences are defined in terms of their internal structure. There are three types: statements, imperatives, and questions. Context-free sentences are minimum sentences having at least one independent clause.

#### Examples of context-free sentences:

Statement:   rame kitap porhise  
                 ram book is reading  
                 Ram is reading a book.

                 ami kailoi kolikataloi zam  
                 we tomorrow to Calcutta shall go  
                 We shall go to Calcutta tomorrow.

Imperative:   duarkhon bondho kora  
                 the door shut do  
                 Shut the door.

                 zodi tso koi kamto koribason  
                 if he says the work do  
                 Please do the work if he says to

Question:     tso ketia ahibo aru tumi ketia zaba  
                 he when will come and you when will go  
                 When will he come and when will you go?

                 tumi eta sigaret kabane  
                 you one cigarette will eat (question mark)  
                 Will you smoke a cigarette?

These sentences can stand by themselves and communicate meaning. However in a wider sense, the sentence is a unit which operates directly in a situation. That is to say, the sentence is contextually conditioned. Here of course we are influenced by Malinowski's ethnographic theory of language.<sup>12</sup> Malinowski argues that the main function of language is not to express thought, but rather to play an active pragmatic part in human behaviour. Just as a word receives its full meaning against the background of its setting within a sentence, so any utterance must be measured against the cultural background of the speech community.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.242 Context-bound sentences:

The basic criteria for the categorization of context-bound sentences are that each of them implies a full, complete utterance and that each can only stand by itself in the context of situation. The situations in which they occur contain part of the meaning of context-bound sentences. They may as well be called sequence sentences as they constitute responses to, or echos of, previous utterances, which may be statements, imperatives or questions. Examples of context-bound sentences follow:

#### 1. Answer to a question:

kolikatat tɛo kot thake  
in Calcutta he where lives  
Where does he live in Calcutta?

---

12) Bronislaw Malinowski, Coral Gardens and their Magic.

13) "Whereas the context of Malinowski had been the actual relevant bits of environment, physiological, traditional, cultural and so on, Firth proposed the context of situation should be understood as an abstract framework of categories of different kinds." R.H. Robins, "General Linguistics in Great Britain, 1930-60", Trends in Modern Linguistics, Mass.

kailoi tumi ketia zaba  
 tomorrow you when will go  
 When tomorrow are you going?

## 2. Exclamations:

zui zui  
 Fire Fire!

dehio  
 Oh dear! Dear me!

dhetteri  
 Oh no!

## 3. Vocative:

heri danoria  
 Hello gentleman  
 Hello sir.

O gopal  
 Hey! Gopal!

## 4. Greetings:<sup>14</sup>

nomoskar  
 Hello (good morning)

dhonjobad  
 Thank you

## 5. Lists:

kitab, kagaz, kolom, siahi, ittadi  
 books, papers, pens, ink, etc.

---

14) dhonjobad nomoskar, etc. exist in the competence of native speakers only. They are not normally used in everyday situations. Their meanings are conveyed by extra-linguistic signs such as gestures and social expressions. dhonjobad (thank you), for example, is expressed by a little smile in the face of the speaker. This type of extra-linguistic communication is referred to by Malinowski as phatic communion. It serves an important function in social relations. Educated Assamese are now however beginning to use dhonjobad, nomoskar, etc. perhaps in imitation of English.

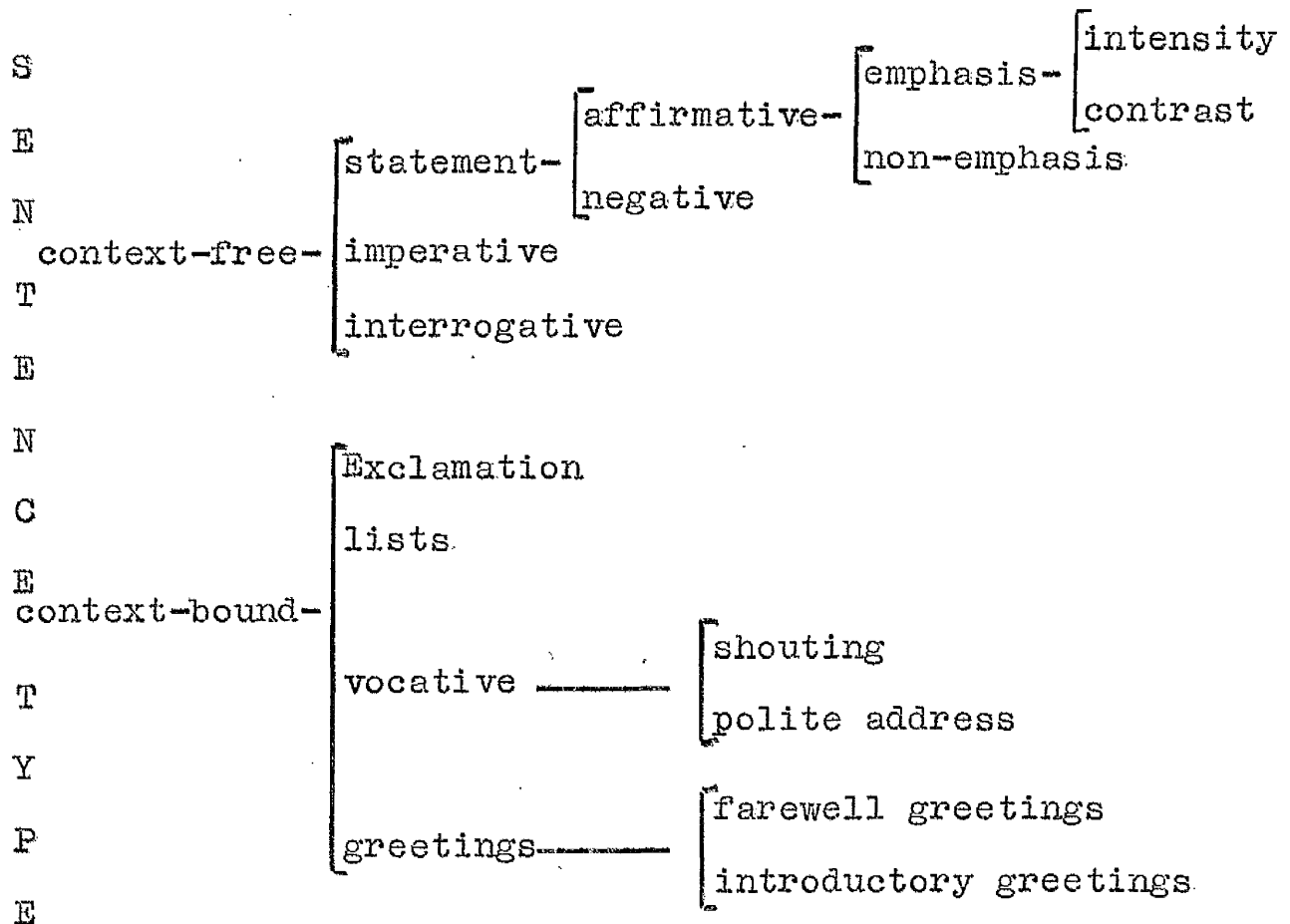
## 6. Conditionals:

zodi tomar bhal lage  
if his need becomes.  
If he needs.

zodi tomar bhal lage  
if your good touches  
If you like.

3.243 Delicacy in sentence-types:

All Assamese sentences are either context free or context-bound. These are the primary sentence types. We can move from primary sentence types to more delicate sentence types. We may, for example, talk more delicately about statement, one of the primary sentence types. The following diagram shows a move in delicacy together with a system of sub-types of sentences:



For example, we can have an affirmation-emphasis-intensity statement:

mahatma gandhi ezon bor hot purux asil  
 Mahtma Gandhi one very honest man was  
 Mahatma Gandhi was a very honest man.

The Sentence is divided into two types, context-free and context-bound. Statement, imperative and interrogative can be chosen only when context-free has already been chosen, and so on. Intensity and contrast are of a higher degree of delicacy with respect to statement. This means that the choice of intensity implies a previous choice of statement.

Here, to determine the place of the sentence in the delicacy scales, we have again to do a little squinting. In other words we seek the help of phonology. Sentence sub-types of different degrees of delicacy are expounded by different intonation patterns. These sub-types show the network of grammar at a higher degree of abstraction than did the primary types.

### 3.3 The primary elements of sentence-structure:

We must approach the sentence from below because of its unique position at the top of the rank-scale. It does not operate in the structure of any higher unit, but it does consist of one or more complete members of the unit next below. These members are the constituents of the constitute called sentence. Within the framework of our model, "To-day", for example, is a sentence which is one clause which is one group which is one word. Similarly in Assamese gra ('yes', in answer to a question) is an exponent of one sentence which consists of one clause which consists of one group which consists of one word which consists of one morpheme. "The relation among the

units, then, is that going from top (largest) to bottom (smallest), each consists of one or more than one of the unit next below (next smaller)".<sup>15</sup> This means that the theory does not allow for jumping; all sentences consist of one or more than one clause, all clauses of one or more than one group and so on down the rank-scale. The sentence can only be structurally defined in terms of its primary elements of structure. These elements of structure are  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\lambda$ .  $\alpha$  is expounded by a free clause ( $k_f$ ),  $\beta$  by a dependent clause ( $k_d$ ), and  $\lambda$  is an exponent of linkage (th linking element). We can have a sentence with only one element  $\alpha$ . Only a  $k_f$  can occur in a context-free sentence. The occurrence of  $\beta(k_d)$  and  $\lambda$  (linkage) as sentences are context-bound.

teo ezon bor sotur lora asil  
he one very clever boy was  
He was a very clever boy.

Here we have a sentence which consists of only one clause. It is context-free and so is expounded by  $k_f$

### 3.31 Simple and compound sentence structures:

The structure of the sentence may be divided into two types: simple and compound. The distinction between a simple sentence and a compound sentence is one of structure.<sup>16</sup>

#### 3.311 Simple sentence structure:

A simple sentence structure is one in which there is no linking element. There are two types of simple sentence

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15) Halliday, 'Categories', p. 251.

16) "The simple-compound opposition is thus one of structure". Halliday, 'Categories', p. 253, fn 31.







oxom ekhon dhunia dex aru zodio iar manuh dukhia

tothapi teolok hot

Assam one beautiful country and although its people poor, yet they honest.

Assam is a beautiful country and although its people are poor, they are honest.

teo ialoi ahisil aru mor logot kotha hoisil

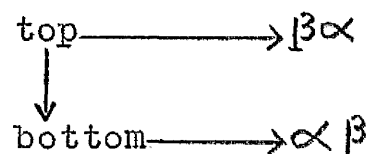
zodio teor lagotmor sinaki nasil

he here came and my in company words happened although his in company my acquaintance was not

He came here and had a talk with me although we had not been acquainted with him.

### 3.33 Sequence of the element of sentence structure:

The primary structure of the sentence is thus made up of  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\lambda$ , that is to say, the free clause, the dependent clause and the linking element. Sequence does not play a crucial part in the definition of the elements. We may have any number of  $\alpha$ 's and  $\beta$ 's and  $\lambda$ 's.  $\beta$  may precede or follow or interrupt  $\alpha$ ;  $\alpha$  may precede or follow or interrupt  $\beta$ .<sup>18</sup> In a sentence containing both  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ , the normal sequence is that  $\beta$  precedes  $\alpha$ . We might show it on a probability scale ranging from "most probable" (top) to "least probable" (bottom):

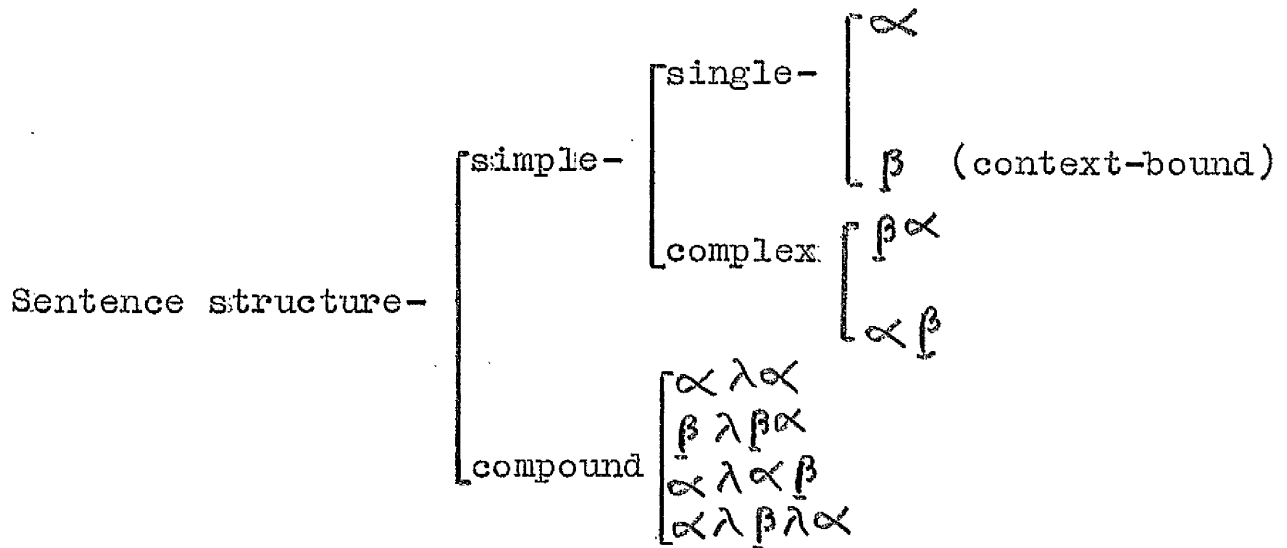


18)  $\alpha$  can interrupt  $\beta$  and  $\beta$  can interrupt  $\alpha$  only in a discontinuous structure. See section 3.42.

In most cases  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\beta\alpha$  are interchangeable without any semantic difference.

### 3.331 Diagrammatic representation of sentence structure:

Diagrammatically we can show the sentence structure in terms of the elements, clause classes and linking elements.



These are the basic sentence structures, they are expendable in terms of more  $\alpha$ 's and  $\beta$ 's and  $\lambda$ 's.

### 3.4 The $\alpha$ element:

$\alpha$  may be defined as that primary element of sentence structure which is expounded by the primary class, independent clause. The exponent of an independent clause is  $k_f$ . We define  $k_f$  as that primary class which operates at  $\alpha$  making a complete sentence. In the simple sentence structure as well as in the compound sentence structure is obligatory.  $\alpha$  constitutes the nuclear element in any sentence structure.  $\beta$  and  $\lambda$  are satellite elements  $\alpha$  can therefore be expanded by  $\beta$ 's and  $\lambda$ 's. Another very important distinction between independent and dependent clauses is that only a dependent clause ( $k_d$ ) can be rankshifted.

hou ze soalizoni sukot bohi ase tailoi soa

that s.p.<sup>19</sup> the girl<sup>β</sup> in the corner<sup>∞</sup> is sitting  
towards her see

Look at the girl who is sitting in the corner.

Rankshifted= sukot bohi thoka soalizoniloi soa

in the corner<sup>∞</sup> sitting staying towards  
the girl see

Look at the girl in the corner.

kali ze manuhzon ahisil tso azi ahise

Yesterday s.p.<sup>β</sup> the man<sup>∞</sup> came he today has come  
The man who came yesterday has come today.

Rankshifted= kali oha manuhzon azi ahise

Yesterday come the man today has come  
The man who came yesterday has come  
today too.

In both the examples β is rankshifted to group rank  
and functions as an attributive element to ∞.

### 3.41 The marginal ∞:

We can set up formal criteria for the ∞ element.  
∞ may be defined as that primary class of clause (I)  
which can expound the independent clause structure (II)  
which may never be rankshifted. There are some marginal  
cases where dependent clauses can stand on their own.  
They are context-bound dependent clauses. (See section  
3.242). An answer to a question, for example, could be

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19) s.p. stands for sequential particles. We have  
discussed them below.

a context-bound dependent clause and still stand on its own.

Question: tumi kailoi zabane

you tomorrow will go = interrogative<sup>20</sup>  
Will you go tomorrow? marker

Answer: zodi ram ahe ... (moil kailoi zam)

If Ram comes (I tomorrow will go)  
If Ram comes (I will go tomorrow)

The sequential element zodi introduces the  $\beta$  - element which can stand without the help of  $\alpha$ .  $\alpha$  is in fact optional.

### 3.42 Discontinuous sentence structure:

Usually the constituents of a given construction will occur next to one another in sentences, showing the interrelation of parts to whole. The sequence of the constituents of  $\alpha$  is followed or preceded by the sequence of the constituents of  $\beta$ . That is, the normal sentence structure that we get is either  $\alpha\beta$  or  $\beta\alpha$ . But it is possible that  $\alpha$  may interrupt  $\beta$  or  $\beta$  may interrupt  $\alpha$ . In the sequence of the constituents of  $\alpha$ , we can insert  $\beta$ . This makes  $\alpha$  discontinuous. The important thing to notice is that insertion of  $\beta$  into  $\alpha$  is not obligatory in any case. It is merely stylistic.

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20) Interrogative markers have been discussed in Chapter VI.

### 3.43 Examples of discontinuous $\alpha$ :

tirotazonie zetia manuhzon dekhile mok totalike  
matile  $\alpha$   $\beta$   $\alpha$

the woman when the man saw me at once called

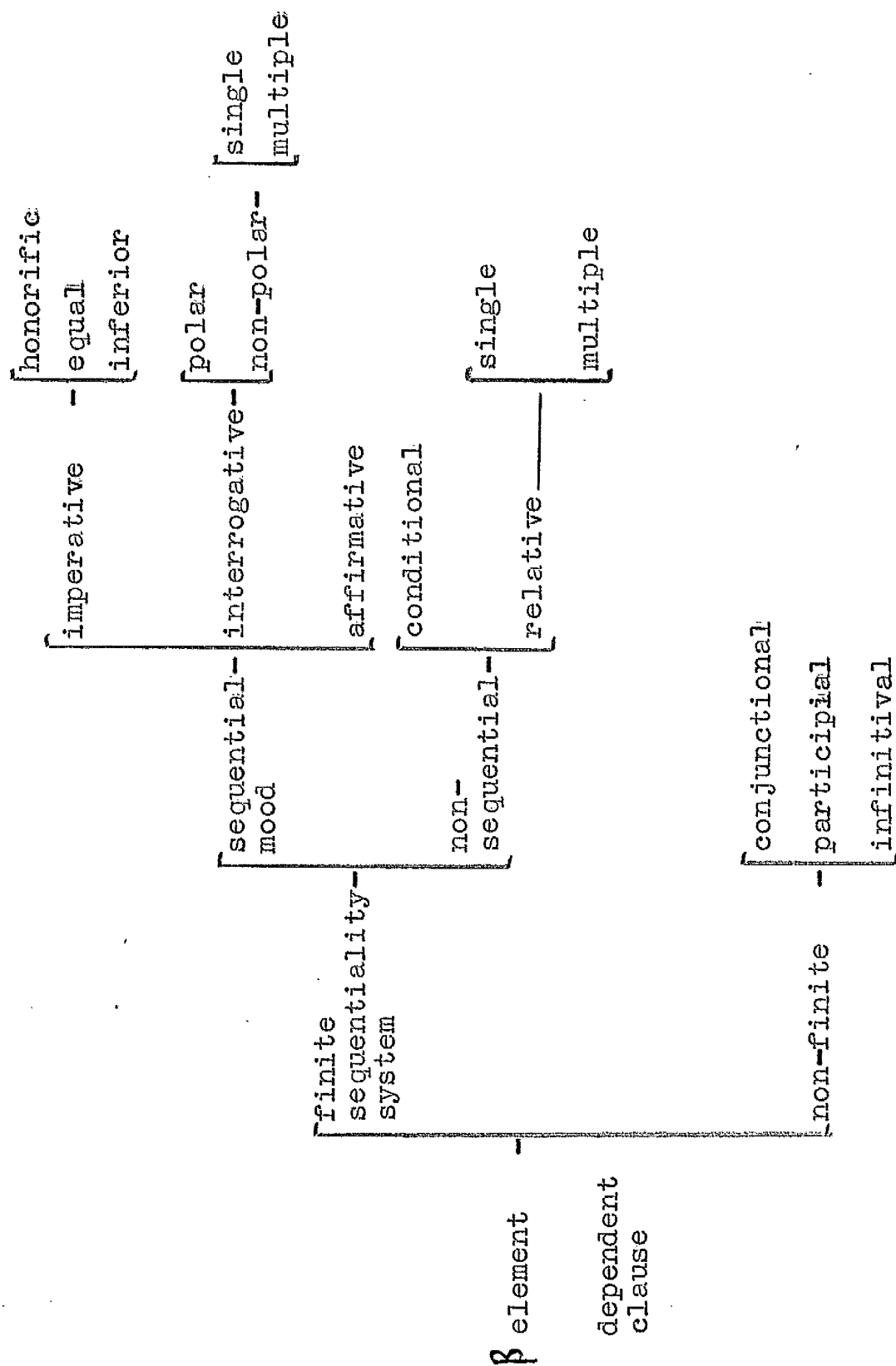
When the woman saw the man she called me immediately.

One important feature of a discontinuous structure is suppression of the subject. The subject tirotazonie of  $\alpha$  also continues to be the suppressed subject of  $\beta$ . There is a definite pause before and after the discontinuous elements, which is conveyed by a complex intonation pattern.

### 3.5 The $\beta$ element:

$\beta$  is the primary element of sentence structure which is expounded by the class dependent clause  $k_d$ . Morphologically a dependent clause may be marked by the presence of one or more linking elements.

3.51 Diagrammatically we can show the following secondary classes of the  $\beta$  element.





### 3.52 The system of finiteness:

The class dependent clause breaks into finite and non-finite dependent clauses forming a two term system of sequentiality.

#### 3.521 Formal criteria for finite and non-finite dependent clauses

The following are the formal criteria for finite dependent clauses and non-finite dependent clauses.

1) A finite dependent clause has a finite verbal group and a non-finite dependent clause has a non-finite verbal group.

2) In the verbal finite group, there is concord of person and grade, whereas in the non-finite verbal group there is nothing of the sort. Some indeclinable particles are added to the latter.

3) Sequential particles (S.P.) initiate the finite-dependent clause whereas no sequential particles are needed to initiate any non-finite dependent clause.

An example will clarify this point:

a) Finite dependent clause:-

soalizonie kole zo mor ekhon sithi ase

the girl said that my one letter is  
The girl said (to me) that I had a letter.

teo axa korisil teor lorazone zen pondit hoi

he hope did his the son that scholar become  
He hoped that his son would be a scholar.

21

21) Here  $\beta$  is discontinuous since it is interrupted by the sequential particle zen. The normal structure would be: teo axa korisil zen teor lorazone pondit hoi.

b) Non-finite dependent clause:<sup>22</sup>

tsə bhal hoat ami bhat paiso

$\beta$   $\alpha$   
he good having got we good get  
We are happy that he is well.

hi mok dahka nidi ghoroloi gol

$\beta$   $\alpha$   
he me see not giving to home went  
He went home without seeing me.

3.53 The system of sequentiality:

The finite dependent clause has two systems, sequential and non-sequential. The following are the main distinctions between the sequentials and non-sequentials.

- I. The sequentials can introduce a dependent clause which usually precedes independent clause.
- II. The sequentials may be expounded by sequential particles, such as ze, həno bole dekhon zen
- III. The sequentials enter into the system of mood.
- IV. The non-sequentials alone can select from the system of conditional and relative clauses.

3.531 System of mood at  $\beta$ :

The sequentials initiate  $\beta$ , and take part in the three-termed mood system: imperative, indicative and interrogative.<sup>23</sup> There are various syntactic markers that reflect the mood-system at  $\beta$ .

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22) In non-finite dependent clauses,  $\beta$  seems to precede  $\alpha$ . In these two examples if  $\alpha$  precedes  $\beta$ , they will exhibit stylistic variation rather than semantic variation.

23) The mood system has been fully discussed in Chapter VI. Here we are only indicating the overt marking that reflects the mood-system at  $\beta$ .

3.532 Imperative mood at  $\beta$ :

There is no overt marking for this, but an explicit indication is given by the tentative pause which precedes  $\beta$  before it enters the imperative mood system. The imperative enters into a three-termed grade system: honorific, equal and inferior. There is person-grade concord in the verb.

System of mood -  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{imperative-system of grade-} \\ \text{indicative} \\ \text{interrogative} \end{array} \right. \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{honorific} \\ \text{equal} \\ \text{inferior} \end{array} \right.$

moi tekhetok kolo, apuni azi zaok<sup>24</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ honorific grade

moi tsok kolo, tumi azi zoa \_\_\_\_\_ equal grade

moi tak kolo, toi azi za \_\_\_\_\_ inferior grade

I him told you today go  
I told him, please go today

3.533 Indicative mood at  $\beta$ :

The outward grammatical form of the indicative mood at  $\beta$  is that it is preceded or interrupted by a sequential particle

tai kole ze tai taloi zabo<sup>25</sup>  
S.P.

She said that she to him shall go  
She said that she would marry him.

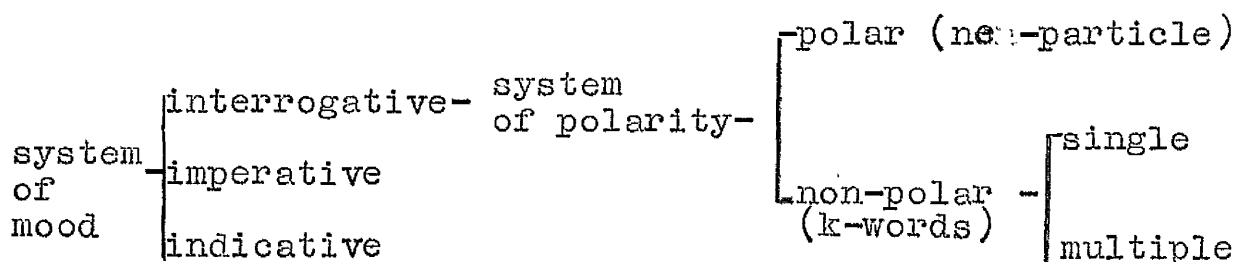
ram ahibo buli moi zano  
S.P.

Ram will come that I know  
I know that Ram will come.

<sup>24</sup>) \_\_\_\_\_ indicates grade-verb concord.  
<sup>25</sup>) Another meaning is: She said that she would go there.

### 3.534 Interrogative mood at $\beta$ :

We have to distinguish at one further degree of delicacy within the interrogative mood, the secondary classes of polar and non-polar.<sup>26</sup> The polar (confirmation interrogative) is expounded by the interrogative particle.<sup>27</sup> The non-polar interrogatives (information interrogative) are expounded by k-words.<sup>28</sup> The non-polar can be split into a further degree of delicacy: single and multiple:



When  $\beta$  enters the interrogative mood system, we have two different sentence structures in terms of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ .

### 3.5341 Polar at $\beta$ with ne particle:

In the case of polar with ne particle, we have the following syntactic evidence:

- I.  $\beta$  always precedes  $\alpha$
- II. Sequential particles precede  $\beta$  and succeed  $\alpha$  if there is ~~not~~ any sequential particle.
- III.  $\beta$  precedes  $\alpha$  but occasionally for emphasis  $\alpha$  may precede  $\beta$  with a tentative pause.

26) "Polar being the 'yes-no' or confirmation interrogative, non-polar the 'WH' or information interrogative".

Halliday, Intonation and Grammar in British English, p.24.

27) We have discussed the interrogative particle ne in full details in Chapter VI.

28) The following is a list of non-polar (confirmation)  
cont'd next page

Polar with ne particle:

tak poisa lagene buli moi hudhilo  
IP SP

him money needs I asked  
I asked him whether he needed money

təo goisil ne moi nazano  
IP

he went inter. I not know  
I don't know whether he went.

moi nazano, təo goisil ne  
IP

I not know he went inter  
I don't know whether he want.

### 3.5342 Non-polar at $\beta$ with k-words:

The only syntactic evidence for non-polar at  $\beta$  with k-words is that  $\beta$  precedes  $\alpha$ . However if  $\alpha$  precedes  $\beta$ , we get difference only in syntactic value but not in meaning.

Non-polar single: There is only one k-word in:-

təo kar ghoroloi gol moi nazano  
k-word

he whose to house has gone I don't know  
I don't know whose house he went to.

---

interrogative words which we shall require later in the thesis:  
ki-what, kon-who, kot-where (place), kar-whose, kak-whom, kio-why, kiman-how much, ketiā-when, koloi, where (direction), kone-who;  
Since these words begin with /k/ we call them k-words.

tomar nam ki mok koason

k-word

Your name what me tell please

Please tell me, what is your name?

Non-polar multiple<sup>29</sup> There is more than one k-word in:-

kone kio koloi gol moi kenekoi zano

who shy where has gone I how know

How do I know who has gone where, and why?

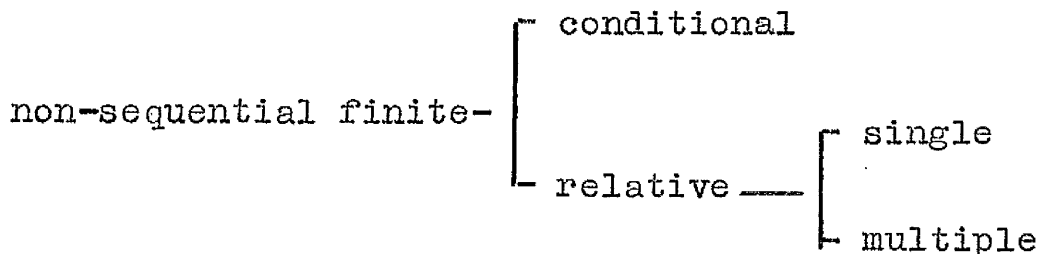
tak tumi ketia kot log paisa mok koa

him you when where company got me tell

Tell me where and when you met him.

### 3.54 The system of the non-sequentials at $\beta$ :

The non-sequentials are further divided into conditionals and relatives. These divide into systems of even greater delicacy:



Each of the above clause types can occur at  $\beta$ . For these in turn, the conditional linking elements are:

karon	}	because of
karone		
babe		
zodi	}	though
zodie		
zodioba		

---

29) Syntactically there is no difference whatsoever between non-polar single and non-polar multiple except that we get more than one k-word in the latter.

Syntactically the conditional at  $\beta$  influences the structure of the sentence in the following way:

$\beta$  precedes  $\alpha$ , provided the conditional particle (C.P.) initiates the whole sentence.

zodi tumi itsa kora tumi ahibo para  
C.P.

if you wish do you come may  
You may come if you wish.

But  $\alpha$  precedes  $\beta$  only if the conditional particle initiates  $\beta$  alone.

hi ahibo noarile karon tgor deutakor okh k  
C.P.

he to come not able because his father's illness  
He couldn't come because his father was ill.

### 3.541 Discontinuous correlatives:

There are a few linked pairs of correlatives. Their function is to link two related clauses,  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . There are two items in each pair of correlatives: Co-ordinator initiating  $\alpha$ , and sub-ordinator initiating  $\beta$ . Both the co-ordinator and sub-ordinator form a continuum. Semantically they are of related meaning and sometimes of related sound. Although they are paired together, they are discontinuous in distribution in that both the items stand apart. A co-ordinator between clauses may be cut out with only stylistic difference. The following are the linked pairs of correlatives:

sub-ordinator.....co-ordinator

zodio.....tothapi	even though...yet
zihetu.....heikarore	because.....therefore
zihetuke.....hetuke	because.....therefore
zodi.....(tente)	if.....then
zodi.....(tente)	if.....then

zodio tso mok matisil tothapi moinogolo

$\beta$   $\alpha$

although he me invited yet I not went  
Although he invited me, still I didn't go.

zihetuke tumi ialoiahisa heihetuke tumi iat thoka

$\beta$   $\alpha$

since you have come therefore you here stay  
You stay here since you have come here.

zodi tso ahe (tente) moi zam

$\beta$   $\alpha$

if he comes (then) I shall go.  
I shall go if he comes.

### 3.542 The relative clauses at $\beta$ :

The first selection possibility in the system network of the non-sequential dependent clause is the choice of either relatives or conditionals. In other words, relatives and conditionals are mutually exclusive. The distinguishing feature of a relative clause is that it makes at least one selection from the following elements:

Relative Adjunct ( $R_A$ )  
Relative Subject ( $R_S$ )  
Relative Object ( $R_O$ )



Whatever may be our selection, there must be a relative word or a z-word,<sup>30</sup> which is the exponent of the relative clause. We may subdivide the relative clauses into single and multiple, depending on the number of relative elements, or z-words selected.

We are concerned here with how relatives operating at  $\beta$  affect the sentence structure. When a relative clause is realized in  $\beta$ , it always precedes  $\alpha$ :

$R_A$ : Single:

zoloji zabo khoza taloi zoa  
 $R_A$              $\beta$                      $\alpha$

where to go want there go  
 Go wherever you like.

Multiple:

zetia zoloji zabo khoza tetia taloi zoa  
 $R_A$              $\beta$                      $\alpha$

when where to go want then there  
 Go whenever and wherever you like.

$R_O$ : Single:

zi koribo khoza take kora  
 $R_O$              $\beta$                      $\alpha$

which to do want that do  
 Do whatever you want.

---

30) The following is an exhaustive listing of the set of relative words. This set is a closed class:  
 zi-who, zone-who, zot-where, zar-whose, ziman-how much, zetia-when, zenekoi-how, zoloi-where, zak-whom.  
 Since these words begin with /z/ we may call them z-words. They are the initiators of relative clauses.

Multiple:

moi zi zak koribo koiso tso take korok  
 $R_0$                        $\beta$                        $\alpha$

I which whom to do have said he that do  
 Let him do what I asked him to do.

$R_S$ : Single:<sup>31</sup>

zone khoze tso pai  
 $R_S$                        $\beta$                        $\alpha$

who wants he gets  
 Whoever wants gets.

In each of the above examples, we have selected only one of the three alternatives: relative adjunct, relative subject and relative object. We can, however, make more than one selection. Consider the relative elements in the following sentence:

$R_S + R_A + R_O$  :

zone zetia zi khoze tso tsia hei pai  
 $R_S$                        $R_A$                        $R_O$                        $\beta$                        $\alpha$

who when what wants he then that get  
 If anyone wants anything at any time, he'll get it.

Another syntactic feature of the relative clause at  $\beta$  is that each k-word is tied up by the concordance of

---

31) Whereas we can have more than one relative adjunct or more than one relative object at  $\beta$ , we can have only one relative subject. The restriction is obviously derived from the fact that  $\beta$ , at any rate, can have only one subject.

t-words.<sup>32</sup> The whole arrangement of the sentence is such that there is a correlation between k-words in  $\beta$  and t-words in  $\alpha$ . This relationship is one of one-to-one correspondence, that is to say, every k-word in  $\beta$  is followed by a t-word in  $\alpha$ . Both z-words and t-words are pairs of related meaning and sometimes of related sounds. It is to be noted that t-words never occur in  $\beta$ . They occur only in free clauses.

### 3.55 The non-finite dependent clauses.<sup>33</sup>

As we have mentioned above, the non-finite dependent clause is marked by the presence of a non-finite verbal group. It may be subdivided into the following types:-

non-finite dependent clause	hypothetical (le)	[single reduplicate]
	participial (i)	
	categorical (t)	

---

32) The interrogative k-words, the relative z-words and correlative t-words are semantically tied to each other. Sometimes they are of related sounds. The following is a complete list of the k-words, z-words, and t-words:

<u>Interrogative k-words</u>	<u>Relative z-words</u>	<u>Correlative t-words</u>
ki	zi	hi
kon	zon	hi
kot	zot	tat
kar	zar	tar
kiman	ziman	timan
kenekoi	zenekoi	tenekoi
koloi	zoloi	taloi
kone	zone	teo

33) To say "dependent clauses at  $\beta$ ", would be redundant. Since  $\beta$  and dependent are identical, only dependent can occur at  $\beta$ .

The most outstanding feature of these clauses is that there is no subject-verb concord at  $\beta$ . In other words, apart from some fixed non-finite verbal suffixes added to the verbal group at  $\beta$ , no regular conjugation is needed.

Morphologically, suffix ile is added to the non-finite hypothetical, i to the participial and t to the categorical non-finite.

### 3.551 Non-finite hypothetical ile:

Semantically, hypothetical non-finite represents the conditional completion of action. It may also imply conditional possibility. The suffix ile is added to the base form of the verb. When ile is realized in  $\beta$ , it always precedes  $\propto$  which is always in the future tense.

teso ahile moi zam

$\beta$   
he having come I will go  
I will go when he comes.

gopale ghoroloi ahile tumi tak kothato koba

$\beta$   $\propto$   
Gopal to home having come you him the word will say  
You will tell Gopal about the matter as soon as he gets back.

### 3.552 Non-finite participial i :

The participial i is added to the base form of the verb at  $\beta$ . This expresses a past tense which can be immediately followed by a present or a past or a future tense at  $\beta$ . The subject of  $\propto$  is suppressed or omitted.

This string comprises two clauses, the boundary of the first clause being indicated by a rising intonation. As in the system network shown above, the participial i<sup>34</sup> could be either single or reduplicated.

Single:

teo bhat khai ghoroloi gol

$\beta$   $\alpha$   
he rice eating to home has gone  
He went home after his meal.

moi taloi goi kamto korim

$\beta$   $\alpha$   
I there going the job will do  
I will go there and do the job.

Reduplicated:

Reduplicated participial i conveys the notion of prolonged or durativized action.

hi kam kori kori nihokotia hol

$\beta$   $\alpha$   
he work doing doing thin became  
He became thin doing hard work (for a long time).

---

34) Participial i has two alternants - i and a. They are not only different in phonetic form, but also differ in function and in distribution. i is consequential in meaning and non-finite verbal in function. It can occur only in  $\beta$ . a on the other hand is a verbal adjective and attributive in function. The following pair of sentences will well illustrate this generalization:

kam kori manuhzon gol  
work working the man went away  
the man went away after having done the job.

kam kora manuhzon gol  
work working the man went away  
The working man has gone away

moi goi goi gaor hatkhon palogoi  
 $\beta$   $\alpha$

I going going of village the market reached  
 I reached the village market after a lot of walking.

### 3.553 Non-finite categorical t :

The syntactic marker of non-finite categorical is the completive suffix t. The meaning is that of a pluperfect expressing action completed prior to some past point of time specified or implied.  $\beta$  with non-finite categorical always precedes  $\alpha$  with anticipated past.<sup>35</sup>

beli mar golot ami ubhoti ahilo  
 $\beta$   $\alpha$

the sun set having gone we return came  
 We came back after sunset.

teok opoman korat ami bea paiso  
 $\beta$   $\alpha$

him insult having done we bad got  
 We are sorry that he was insulted.

### 3.56 Recursive structures:

So far we have been concerned with place-ordered sentence structures, that is to say, we have discussed sentence structures in terms of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . Assamese exhibits a different kind of structure as well as the recursive or depth-ordered<sup>36</sup> structure. An element of structure or a combination of structure-elements is repeated in depth, a series of such elements thus forming a progression. Any

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35) This construction is analogous to the construction of the nominative absolute, such as: this being so I did nothing.

36) Halliday: Chain and Choice, p.12

rankshifted unit may theoretically be recursive and an infinite number of degrees of recursion is theoretically possible. But in actual practice recursion is not frequent. In spoken Assamese recursion reduces acceptability.<sup>37</sup> There are two kinds of recursion: paratactic recursion and <sup>hypotactic</sup>hypotatactic recursion.

### 3.561 Parataxis and hypotaxis:

Two kinds of relations between clauses have been recognized traditionally, co-ordination and sub-ordination. Parataxis is roughly equivalent to co-ordination. Hypotaxis corresponds to subordination. The co-ordination kind is a relation of presupposition between things which are alike or homogeneous and the sub-ordinate kind between things which are heterogeneous. Homogeneous relations relate to natural elements of the same type: heterogeneous relations relate natural elements of different types. According to Nida, hypotaxis and parataxis are the two principal types of structural cohesion.<sup>38</sup> Hypotactic constructions are those which exhibit considerable structural unity. Paratactic constructions are those in which one constituent stands in a sort of extra-positional relationship to the other. Both can be illustrated in the clause complexes. By clause complex we mean that anything above the clause is a clause-complex. A clause complex can be either

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37) "Spoken English seems to tolerate greater depth in recursion, or at least to tolerate it more readily, than written English: and this may be true of language generally." Halliday: 'Chain and Choice', p.12. This statement, however, does not fit in the case of Assamese. Written Assamese seems to tolerate greater depth in recursion than spoken Assamese.

38) E.A. Nida, 'An outline of Descriptive Syntax of English', Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1961.

paratactic or hypotactic.

An example of paratactic construction:

bidjai manuhor gourob borhai, dhone manhor khomota borhai,  
eia mor biswax       $\propto$        $\propto$   
 $\propto$

learning man's glory increases, wealth man's power increases  
 this my belief.

It is my belief that knowledge increases one's glory and  
 wealth increases one's power.

An example of hypotactic construction:

teo mok kole ze kexobe porikkat pas koribo noarile karon  
 $\propto$  hi heno bhalkoi porhibo pora nasil zodioba hi porhar  
 $\beta^3$  zothestho huzog paisil.  
 $\beta^3$

he me said that Keshab in the examination pass to do not  
 able because he is well to read was not able although he  
 of reading much opportunity got

He told me that Keshab couldn't pass the examination,  
 because although he had enough time to study he couldn't  
 do it well.

These two examples show that the hypotactic structure  
 is endocentric and has a single centre. The paratactic one  
 is exocentric, each constitute having a separate centre.

3.562 Paratactic recursion:

Linear recursion in clause complexes is called  
 paratactic recursion. Its basic principle is that of  
 coordination. Juxtaposition, addition, apposition are the  
 exponents of coordination. There are definite criteria  
 identifying these three kinds of coordination. The basic  
 criteria is that in juxtaposition we can have a string of  
 two clauses only. In additive and appositive coordination



we can have a string of more than two clauses. This syntactic criterion is general and operative. It is supplemented by phonological criteria.

### 3.5621 Juxtapositive coordination:

Two independent clauses are linked together by juxtaposition to constitute a paratactic structure. In spoken Assamese, the exponent of juxtaposition is pause between the clauses. The pause functions as a coordinator. In written Assamese, the punctuation mark comma (,) is the coordinator, and is therefore functional.

#### Examples of juxtapositive coordination:

bohut polom hol, moi zaodei

much late became, I go wish (pol.)  
It's very late. I want to go, please.

teo ubhoti ahibo, sinta nokoriba

he return will come, thinking don't make.  
He'll come back, don't worry.

Nida calls this sort of juxtaposition an associative parataxis.<sup>39</sup> But in Assamese what we call an associative parataxis is merely a string of two independent clauses.

### 3.5622 Additive coordination:

The reversibility of word order is the criterion for additive coordination. The reversal of word order can

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39) E.A. Nida, An Outline Descriptive Syntax of English, Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1961.

show another kind of coordination between two independent clauses. The word order of the first clause is reversed in the second clause. The result of this conjoining is emphasis.<sup>40</sup> Any linking element between two clauses can function as an emphatic element. When a linking element between clauses has been left out resulting only in stylistic difference, the independent clauses are juxtaposed, and stand in a coordinative relation. Examples of additive coordination follow:

hotjoi hunder, hundorei hotjo

truth beauty beauty truth  
Truth is beauty and beauty is truth.

bhal saistho mane bhal ahar aru bhal abar

mane bhal saistho

good health means good food and good food means  
good health.

Good health and good food go together.

Linkage is carried by the absence of a number of elements in the second clause which are present in the first clause. We make use of 'understood' elements only when they have already appeared in the preceding clause. This may be called elliptical coordinative structure.<sup>41</sup>

Examples of elliptical structure:

moi rona humothirahe kinim kintu kesa nohoj

I red oranges will buy but green not  
I will buy red oranges but not green ones.

---

40) We have fully discussed word order and emphasis in Chapter IV.

41) Nelson Francis: The structure of American English, p.361

rame porikkat pas koribo parile kintu hori noarile  
 $\alpha$   $\alpha$

Rame in the examination pass to do was able but Hare not able  
 Ram was able to pass the examination but Hare wasn't

### 3.5623 Appositive coordination:

We may have two independent clauses in which the second is placed in apposition to the first one. In an elliptical coordinative structure a single component is assumed to be functioning in two different clauses in the coordinative structure. But in apposition we have a different syntactic situation. In addition we have the characteristics of reversibility of word order and deletion of elements in the second clause. In apposition we have a number of independent clauses together with linkage. The relationship between clauses is one of interdependence (a type of coordination). Theoretically there is no outer limit to such structures of coordination. Victor Yngve rightly says, "sentences, clauses, phrases, and attributes can each be coordinated indefinitely in progressive structure".<sup>42</sup>

Some examples of appositive coordination:

rame porhise, kexobe likhise aru horie sobi akise  
 $\alpha$   $\alpha$   $\alpha$

Rame is reading Keshab is writing and Hari picture is drawing  
 Ram is reading, Keshab is writing and Hari is drawing pictures.

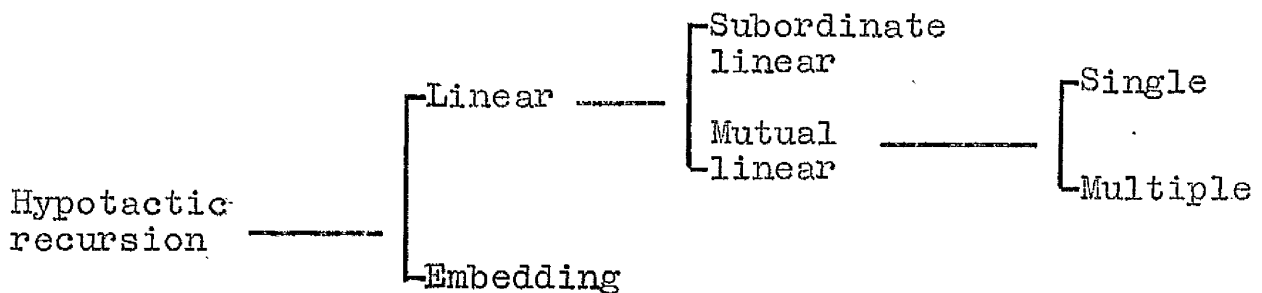
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42) Victor H. Yngve: "A model and a Hypotheses for Language", Proceedings of the American Philological Society, Vol. 104, 1960, p. 456

3.563 Hypotactic recursion:

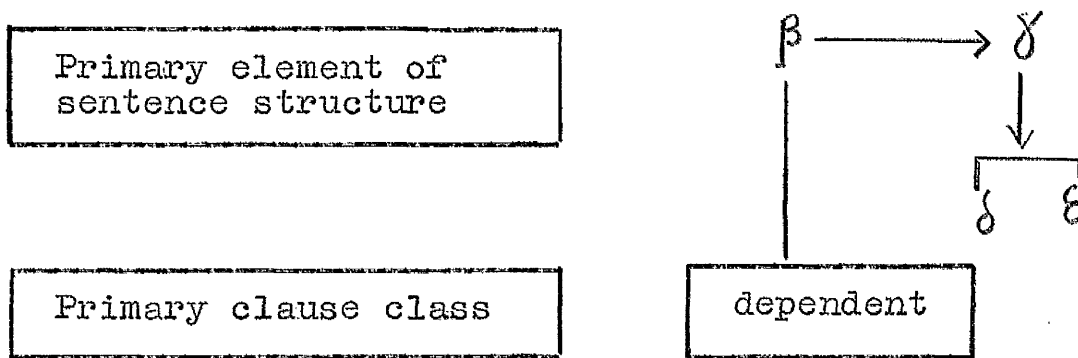
The basic principle of hypotactic recursion is one of subordination. This in turn is based on presupposition. The presupposition relation is a kind of dependence relation between things which are unlike. The sentence structure  $\beta\alpha$  is hypotactically recursive in that  $\beta$  presupposes  $\alpha$ , and logically  $\beta$  is subordinate to  $\alpha$ . There are two types of hypotactic recursion - linear and embedding. Linear can be split further into two other types: Subordinate linear and Mutual linear. Mutual linear can be further divided into two types: Single and multiple.

We can diagram hypotactic recursion in the following way:

3.5631 Linear hypotactic recursion:

Linear hypotactic recursion occurs when two or more constituents occur in a recursive relation and one is subordinate to the other. In linear hypotactic recursion there is potentially infinite repetition of the relationship. That is to say, there is no theoretical limit to the number of clauses that may be related in dependence. The primary elements of sentence structure  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  are class determined; each is expounded by a primary class of the unit clause. By taking a step in delicacy,  $\beta$  may be broken into secondary

elements on the choice axis, yielding secondary choice classes: sequentials, non-sequentials, etc. On the chain axis,  $\beta$  breaks not into discrete, class-determined elements, but into terms in a series.  $\beta$  repeats itself in depth so that we have  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3 \dots$  (or  $\beta, \gamma, \delta, \epsilon$ ). Only the first term is class-expounded; the others are repetitions of the first one, and the terms are all ordered in depth. We can show linear hypotactic recursion diagrammatically in the following way:



The arrow indicates immediate domination.

### 3.5632 Subordinate linear recursion:

We may have a series of dependent clauses each subordinate to one immediately preceding it. This is subordinate linear recursion. Take the following example:

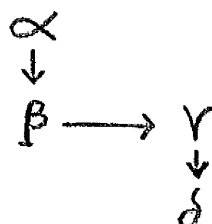
teo mok kole ze kexobe porikkhat pas koribo nowarile  
 $\alpha$   $\beta$   
karon hi heno bhalkoi porhibo pora nasil zodioba porhar  
 $\gamma$   $\delta$   
zothesto huzog paisil

he me said that keshab in the examination pass to do was not able because he possibly well to study was. unable although of studies enough opportunity got.

"He told me that Keshab couldn't pass the examination, because although he had enough time to study, he couldn't do it well.

Here  $\delta$  is subordinate to  $\gamma$ ,  $\gamma$  is subordinate to  $\beta$  and  $\beta$  in turn subordinate to  $\alpha$ .

Diagrammatically:



Here the arrow stands for 'immediately dominates'.  $\alpha$  dominates  $\beta$ ,  $\beta$  dominates  $\gamma$ ,  $\gamma$  dominates  $\delta$ . There is no direct relation between  $\delta$  and  $\alpha$  because we cannot say:

\*teo kole zodioba porhar huzog paisil.

The normal unmarked relation between dependent clauses is that each presupposes the one immediately preceding it. Though  $\delta$  is logically subordinate to  $\alpha$ , this relation of subordination is indirect. Theoretically linear recursive clauses can run on without limit.

### 3.5633 Mutual linear recursion:

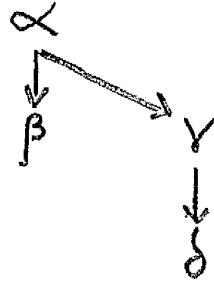
We may have a number of dependent clauses each individually subordinate to another clause:

zodi moi zao tumi iat thakibo lagibo karon horu loratoe  
okole <sup>$\beta$</sup>  thakile moi zabo <sup>$\alpha$</sup>  noaro  
 <sup>$\gamma$</sup>   
 <sup>$\delta$</sup>

if I go you here to stay need because little boy alone  
 having stayed I to go not able

Because I can't leave my child alone, if I go you'll have to stay here.

Diagrammatically we can show the constituent relationship in the following way:



Here  $\beta$  is independently subordinate to  $\alpha$ , because there is no direct relationship between  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ .  $\delta$  is directly subordinate to  $\gamma$  which is subordinate to  $\alpha$ . We can have either  $\beta \alpha$  or  $\alpha \gamma \delta$ . In other words we can leave out either  $\beta$  or  $\gamma \delta$ . This is an example of single  $\alpha$ . This kind of subordination can also occur with more than one  $\alpha$ . Take the following example:

zodi moi zao tui iat thakibo lagibo zodi moi nazao tumi  
 $\beta$   $\alpha_1$   $\gamma$   
iar pora zabo lagibo  
 $\alpha_2$

if I go you here to stay need if I not go you from here to go need

If I go you must stay here but if I don't go, you must leave.

Here  $\beta$  is subordinate to  $\alpha_1$ , and  $\gamma$  is subordinate to  $\alpha_2$ . There is no direct relation either between  $\alpha_1$  and  $\alpha_2$  or between  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ . We might treat the whole utterance as a case of two sentences in juxtaposition. Each sentence has all the structural elements.

### 3.5634 Embedding hypotactic recursion:

Embedding recursion occurs when a clause is rank-shifted to function as a constituent of its own or lower rank

such as a group. For example, a sequence of nominal groups in coordinate relation to each other may function as Subject, Object or Complement in a clause. Embedding recursion occurs at the nominal group whose structure is  $(m)h(q)$ . One of the structural features of embedding recursion is that  $\alpha$  is discontinuous and that  $\beta$  interrupts  $\alpha$ .

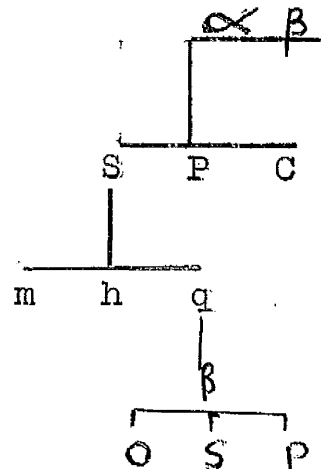
hou manuhzon      zak tumi log paisila      azi ahibo  
 $\alpha$                                    $\beta$                                    $\alpha$   
 that man                  whom you company go          today will come  
 That man you met will come today.

The number of layers in the structural tree assigned to this sentence can be shown diagrammatically:

Sentence structure:

Clause structure:

Group structure:



Assamese sentence structure is characterised by heavy embedding of clause within clause. The nominal group has the structure  $(m)h(q)$  where  $q$  is expounded by the clause  $\beta$ . Two kinds of recursion can be combined by linkage.

### 3.6 Linkage $\wedge$ :

Linkage may be defined as a relation of coordination between two or more like elements. For example, we can



have a sentence with the sentence structure  $\propto \wedge \propto$ .

teso ialoi ahisil    kintu mok dekha nokorile  
 $\propto$                        $\wedge$                        $\propto_2$

he here came but me seeing not did  
 He came here but didn't see me.

In this sentence there are two structural characteristics: first, apart from the fact that  $\propto_1$  and  $\propto_2$  stand in the coordinative relation, the subject in  $\propto_2$  is 'suppressed'. Second, though the  $\propto_1$  clause is unlinked,  $\propto_2$  is linked. Thus linkage is carried by the absence of a number of elements in the second clause which are present in the first clause. In a similar way S O and C can be suppressed in  $\propto_1$  instead of  $\propto_2$ . If the same structural elements are suppressed in  $\propto_1$ , it is known as cataphoric and if they are suppressed in  $\propto_2$ , it is known as anaphoric. The linking elements of the coordinate clauses may be called linkers. Dependent clauses can also be linked. A linked dependent clause is marked by the presence of the linking adjunct. The linking adjuncts may be called binders. Take the following example:

zodi teso ahe    moi nazao  
 $\beta$                        $\propto$

if he comes I not go  
 I won't go if he comes.

Here zodi is a binder.

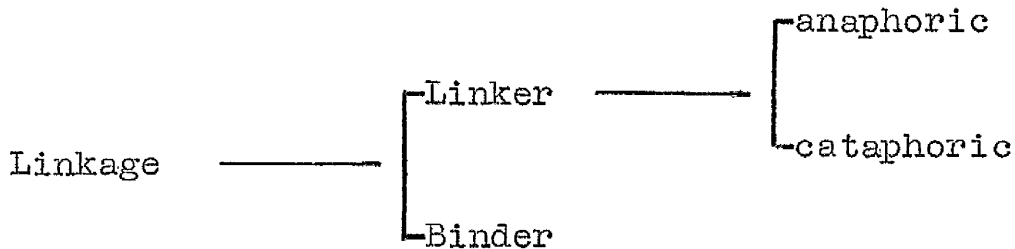
The exponents of linkers are:

aru	'and'	othoba	'or'
kintu	'but'	tetiahole	'then'
ba	'or'	tothapi	'nevertheless'
maiba	'or'	heihetuke	'therefore'

The exponents of binders are:

zodi	'if'
zodihe	'if only'
zihetute	'since'

Diagrammatically we can show linkage in the following way:



### 3.61 Distribution and grammatical status of linkers and binders:

Linkers occur at all ranks except at the level of morpheme. There doesn't, however, seem to be any particular reason why linkers cannot occur between morphemes. Linkers combine two or more sentences, two or more clauses, two or more groups and two or more words. The relation they express is that of coordination. Binders, on the other hand, introduce a subordinate clause and combine it with an independent clause. The structure is either  $\lambda \beta \alpha$  or  $\alpha \lambda \beta$ . In either case  $\lambda$  precedes  $\beta$ . The relation between  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  is one of subordination. The interesting question from a grammatical point of view is what status should be given to these linkers and binders. If they link sentences and bind clauses within a sentence, should they be considered sentences themselves? Otherwise, one could regard the linking item as part of the following clause. Two other points are of particular relevance here. First, Halliday himself does not insist that a structure should be totally accounted for in terms of constituents which are

units or classes of units. He allows for some items, which he calls syntactic markers, not to have 'constituent status'. These therefore need not be carried through the hierarchy. Syntactic markers include linking and binding elements and conjunctions. Secondly, Bendor-Samuel has treated these elements as syntagmatic features extending over more than one member of a unit. This suggestion deserves more attention than it has received so far in connection with the treatment of linkers, binders and clause introducers.

## Chapter IV

### THE CLAUSE

#### 4.1 The clause in the rankscale

The clause is the unit which operates in the structure of the sentence, and is made up of one or more classes of the next lower unit, group. We show the hierarchical relationship between the sentence and the clause in the following diagram.

Sentence structure:  $\alpha \beta$  in terms of clause classes

Clause structure  $\underline{S} \underline{O} \underline{P}$  in terms of group classes

Group structure  $(m) H(q)$  in terms of word classes

#### 4.12 The primary elements of clause-structure

For a description of the Assamese clause, we need five primary elements which may be called S(ubject), O(object), C(omplement), A(djunct) and P(redictor).<sup>1</sup> These elements are defined by their relations to each other and by their exponential relation to group classes.

---

1. S, O, C, A, P - these elements may be called a heap of spare parts or bare essentials (Fries, 1952), out of which we can construct clauses of minimal complexity. It is the structural patterning of these elements which forms the skeleton of every utterance. Each constituent element is potentially a word-group and has its own internal structure.



S, O and C are recognized as three elements of the nominal group because they stand in different relationships to P. There is, of course, a high degree of overlap<sup>2</sup> between the exponents of S, O and C, and hence are primary class (class nominal (N) of the unit group) has been set up as an exponent of both S, O and C. Where these are not co-extensive, the lack of co-extensiveness will be stated by secondary elements and classes.

#### 4.14 Major and Minor clauses:<sup>3</sup>

It is useful to make a distinction between two types of clauses:

- (1) major clauses expandable and context-free.
- (2) minor clauses inexpandable and context-bound.

All major clauses are defined as those which, in terms of their internal structure, are referable to one or other of the 'favourite' clause patterns of the language (see below). The formal criterion of a

---

2. The degree of overlap is very confusing. S takes the casual suffix (e), O takes the casual suffix (k), and C takes zero suffix, that is, bare dictionary entry form. However, at times S and O also take the dictionary entry form. We have discussed this below.

3. Major and minor clause types may be set up on the basis of structure: major clauses contain one or more groups of words and are expandable in terms of groups; minor clauses comprise a single word or group only and are non-expandable.

major clause is that it must have a p (verbal group). The great majority of complete Assamese sentences are formed with a terminal verb as the main element. Indeed p is the most important element in a sentence; neither S nor O nor any other element is necessarily expressed if the context does not require it. In some major clause patterns p is 'understood' that is to say, p is not obligatory but optional. The basic criterion of a minor clause is that there is no p.

#### 4.141 Minor clauses:

Minor clauses are subclassified into two types:

(a) Those which can be referred to longer clauses of 'favourite pattern' (see below). Such minor clauses are sequence clauses, and constitute responses to, or echoes of, previous utterances, which may be statements, questions or commands. Such as the following minor clauses.

- |    |                |                         |
|----|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | kailoi ratipua | tomorrow in the morning |
| 2. | zahazere       | by ship                 |
| 3. | tomar deutalo  | to your father          |
| 4. | kolikatat      | in Calcutta             |
| 5. | khore dhorkoi  | quickly.                |

'Deictic' clauses also come within this category.<sup>4</sup> These minor clauses always contain a demonstrative adjective or a demonstrative pronoun.

---

4. At primary delicacy, one of the possible structures for the nominal group is deictic, which is to say it contains a personal or a demonstrative or both.

- |    |       |          |
|----|-------|----------|
| 1. | apuni | you      |
| 2. | taik  | her      |
| 3. | houto | that one |

(b) Those minor clauses that cannot be referred to as part of a longer sequence, such as sentences or clauses, are therefore structurally independent. They may initiate a conversation. In fact their complete meaning can be understood only by a detailed analysis of the 'context of situation'. Of this type are:

i. Vocatives:

ma	mother
deuta	father
hera lora	boy

ii. Exclamations:

dhetteri	Oh no!
dehio	Oh dear!
dhik	Shame on you!

iii. Greetings:

hera	Hello
ki khobor	What news
tomar kone	How are you?



iv. Surprise:

ki	What!
oho	O dear
zui zui	Fire! Fire!

v. Lists:

kagoz, kolom, siahi ittadi  
 Paper, pen, ink etc.

4.142 Major clauses

All major clauses in Assamese conform to one or other of the favourite patterns set up below in terms of their internal structure by reference to the different combinations of the primary clause elements (SOCAP). All major clause patterns can be cross-classified into the following types:

- i. statements
- ii. interrogative
- iii. imperatives

These types are of the same status as those the minor clauses were classified into above. Each type is formally marked by particles, postfixes or distinct intonation patterns.<sup>5</sup>

---

5. In spoken Assamese, intonation is important in the clause structures. Statements are accompanied by a falling intonation. Interrogatives end with a rising intonation. A rising intonation can make a plain imperative polite and a falling intonation can change what is normally a polite formula into an impatient command.

4.15 Possible combination of primary elements:

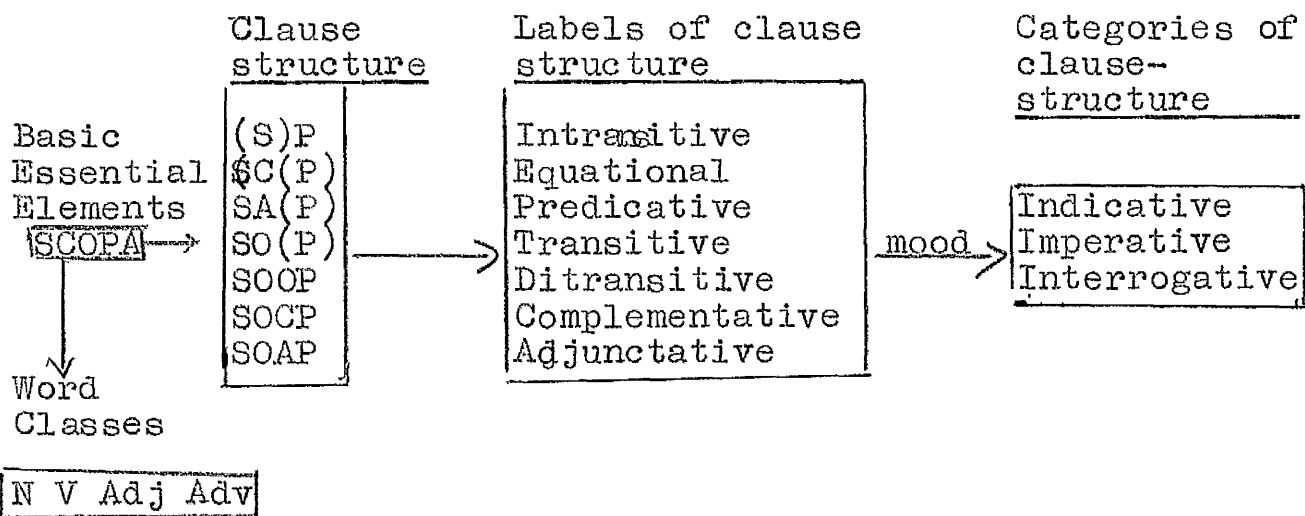
The structural range of the major clauses can be stated in terms of combinations of S O C A and P.

Major clause:

<u>number of elements</u>	<u>structure</u>	<u>exemplification</u>
one element	( <u>P</u> )	aha            come zam            (I)'ll go ahibo          (He'll) come
two elements	( <u>SP</u> )	hi ahise he has come He's come  t <sup>8</sup> o go! He has gone He has gone  bonoxun dise rain gives It's raining
	( <u>OP</u> )	bhat khalo rice have eaten I've had my dinner.  amto kata the mango cut Cut the mango.  ialoi aha here come Come here.  honkale zoa soon go Go soon.
three elements	( <u>SOP</u> )	ami monoho khao we meat eat We eat meat.



freedom for the clause elements. However, restricting the analysis to the 'preferred' order, seven basic ('favourite') clause patterns can be set up. As we have seen in the above section (4.15), these seven clause structures can be stated as combinations of the five primary clause elements in different places. These are the basic material (minimal vocabulary) out of which the seven basic clauses are constructed. Each clause can enter into the network of the mood system so that we get the following configuration of the Assamese clause.



The bracketed elements are optional (peripheral), the other elements are obligatory (nodal). The distinction between nucleus and satellite is crucial in respect of the arrangement of the clause patterns. These seven possible combinations of five elements constitute the primary clause structures. The primary structures are class-oriented, that is to say, each place and each element is defined with reference to the classes of the unit immediately below.

The class nominal (N) of the unit group operates at the places S O C in the clause structure.

The class verbal (V) of the unit group operates at P in the clause structure.

The classes adjectival (A) and adverbial (Adv) operate at A in the clause-structure.

Thus for Assamese three major group classes nominal, verbal and adverbial are set up as nuclear or satellite on the basis of distribution and potentiality of occurrence. Two subclasses of the nominal class are adjectival class and pronominal class. Both function as satellite elements in the nominal group.

The primary structure consists of the minimum number of elements together with the minimum number of places. This is the minimum expansion of the clause structure. As we proceed from the simple to the complex, so do we proceed from the minimum expansion to the maximum expansion of the clause. These seven primary structures of Assamese are basic and as such they are the bones of the language.

#### 4.17 More examples of the primary clause structures:

(S)P is the intransitive clause structure.<sup>6</sup> There are two identifying features of the intransitives:

---

6. The classification of the major clauses is based on elements which constitute the internal structure of the clause. An intransitive clause structure can be both  
(continued...)

- a) intransitive verbs enter into this structure,  
 b) there is only one noun element. This structure  
 is shown in diagram (i) and exemplified by the following  
 sentences.

(i) Structure	S	P
group classes	nominal	verbal

moi zao  
 S P

I go  
 I go.

zaodei  
 P

I go, please  
 Good bye

tumi ahiba dei  
 S P

you come please  
 Do come please.

gopale hui ase  
 S P

Gopal sleeping stays  
 Gopal is sleeping.

hi haturibo zane  
 S P

he to swim is able  
 He can swim.

nahahiba  
 P

not laugh  
 Don't laugh.

korim baru  
 P

I shall do, all right  
 All right I'll do it.

---

6. (continued) unipartite and bipartite. It is unipartite when it consists of a predicate only. The imperatives fit into this type since S can be suppressed. It is bipartite when it consists of a subject and a predicate.

(ii)	Clause structure	S	O	P
	group classes	nominal	nominal	verbal

SOP is a transitive clause structure. It has three important features: transitive verbs, the noun elements, S and O, and the presence of the suffixes i.e. e and -k, marking S and O respectively.<sup>7</sup>

sah ʒkap khalo

O            P  
tea one cup have eaten  
I've had a cup of tea.

babule kitapkhon porhise

S            O            P  
Babul the book has read  
Babul has read the book.

tak matason

O            P  
him call please  
Call him, please

orunai tomak bhal pai

S            O            P  
Aruna you love gets  
Aruna loves you.

tumi mas khoane

S            O            P  
you fish eat+interrogation  
Do you eat fish?

kamto korilo

O            P  
the work have done  
I've done the job.

---

7. One of the ticklish questions that we are faced with is the formalization of the subject marker -e and the object marker -k. Our observation is that transitive verbs always have S with -e but that direct object usually do not take the object marker -k.

(iii) Clause structure	S	C	P
group classes	nominal	nominal	verbal

SC(P) represents the equational clause structure.<sup>8</sup>  
 The following are its linguistic features: First, P may be omitted. Secondly, there are two nouns S and C with no case suffix for either element.

hi ezon bhal lora  
 S            C  
 he one good boy  
 He's a good boy.

borua ezon kobi  
 S            C  
 Mr. Barua one poet  
 Mr. Barua is a poet.

eikhon oxom  
 S            C  
 this one Assam  
 This is Assam.

moi oxomia manuh  
 S            C  
 I Assamese man  
 I'm an Assamese.

P is obligatory in the past as well as in the future. P is also obligatory when it is compounded with the negative and interrogative particles.

---

8. The equational clause is characterized by the structure SOC. A clause of this kind has no verb. The subject may be a noun or pronoun, and by expansion, the subject may be a nominal group. The difference between the intransitive and the equational is that the former may have S with subject-marker, e whereas the latter can have S without any subject-marker. Also in the equational clause, the syntactic element C bears no suffix.



mahatma gandhi    ozon mohot purux asil

S                         C                     P

Mahtma Gandhi one great person was  
Mahatma Gandhi was a great man.

bharotboroxo    Ekhon dhonidex    hobo

India one rich country will be  
India will be a rich country.

(iv)	Clausē structure	S	A	P
	group classes	nominal	adjecti- val	verbal

The structure of the predicative<sup>9</sup> clause is: SA(P)  
The obvious feature of the predicative clause structure is the presence of the syntactic element A. A represents the restricted range of adjuncts. In this clause structure the Adjunct slot is filled by a limited number of adjectives.

tumi bor sotur  
S A  
 you very clever  
 You're very clever.

<u>onzoli</u>	<u>dhunia</u>
S	A
Anjali	beautiful
Anjali	is beautiful.

zon hokotabot  
S A  
John big sized  
John is stout.

mor deuta   hikkit   asil<sup>10</sup>  
           S                    A                    P  
 my father   educated was  
 My father   was educated.

9. The predicative clause structure may be called existential clause in that P in this structure is filled by two existential verbs- ho and as (to be). As in the equational clause structure P is obligatory in the past as well as in the future; in the present it is grammatically omitted.

10. asil is the suppletive form of ho in the past.

kesuato nihokotia hobo  
 S            A            P  
 the baby thin will be  
 The baby will be thin.

v. Clause structure      S            Q            O            P  
                                  group classes      nominal nominal nominal verbal

The structure SQOP is the ditransitive clause structure. It contains three noun elements and a ditransitive<sup>11</sup> verb. The ditransitive verbs are characterized by the presence of two objects: one is direct (O) and the other one is indirect (Q).<sup>12</sup>

make putekok kitapkhon poruaithunale  
 S            Q            O            P  
 mother the son the book make hear after reading  
 The mother read the book to her son.

rame hork kothato kole  
 S            Q            O            P  
 Ram Hari the work said  
 Ram told Hari about the matter.

hi mok poisa dise  
 S            Q            O            P  
 he me money has given  
 He has given me money.

tai kesuatok gakhir khoale  
 S            Q            O            P  
 she the baby milk caused to eat  
 She fed the baby with milk.

---

11. There are only few ditransitive verbs in Assamese. They always take two objects. All ditransitive verbs are transitive, but not all transitive verbs are ditransitive. We have no evidence of verbs that can take three objects.

12. The formal distinction between Q and O has been fully discussed in the section 4.7.



elements: SOAP. Each of them is obligatory. The number of verbs that enter into this structure are small. In fact there is only one verb that seems to fit in this structure. A is filled by adjectives whose range is very limited.

hi duarkhon heuzia korile  
 S O A P  
 he the door green did  
 He's painted the door green.

gandhi bharot swadhin korisil  
 S O A P  
 Gandhi India free did  
 Gandhi made India free

ukile kothato misa proman korile  
 S O A P  
 the lawyer the statement false proof did  
 The lawyer proved the statement to be false.

kothin porisrome tlok rugia korile  
 S O A P  
 hard labour him ill did  
 Overwork made him ill.

We can deduce from the above examples that there is only one verb, so far as we know, which can fit in to this clause structure. The verb is kar which is a transitivity verb taking a direct object between the subject and the adjunct.

The above basic clause structures are shown as combinations of five basic elements (SOCAP) in different places. They are, as we have seen above, the tools with which clauses are built: once we have these in our head, we construct hundreds of clauses by mixing them up. We have already discussed all abnormal arrangements of

elements in the section on word-order (section 4.81).

#### 4.18 The element S

The subject (S) is the primary element of the Assamese clause structure which is expounded by the class nominal of the unit group. But this could as well be said of the object and of the complement, that is to say, O and C are those primary elements of clause structure which are expounded by the class nominal of the unit group. But how do we know which one is S and which one O and so forth?<sup>14</sup>

##### 4.181 Definition and delimitation of (S)

There have been in the main three different approaches towards the definition and delimitation of S in Assamese.

##### 4.182 Concord

We can use concord as the primary criterion for defining subject (S). The exponent of the element S in Assamese clause structure is that nominal group which shows person-grade agreement with the verbal group (exponent of the element predicator). This

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14. In defining these five basic elements S, <sup>O</sup>P, C and A, we are doing so on the basis of concrete formal features, namely, functional and distributional features. These elements or constituents are no longer morphological category but a matter of syntax.

definition works in clauses where we have a string of direct nominal groups (i.e., nominal groups without postpositive particles, such as e) followed by a verbal group. The nominal group has the person-concord<sup>15</sup>. Person plays a crucial part in the syntax of Assamese:

kɛxob kailoi zabo

S        A        P  
Keshab tommorrow shall go  
Keshab will go tomorrow.

moi porohi zam

S        A        P  
I day after tomorrow shall go  
I'll go the day after tomorrow.

tumi kailoi zaba

S        A        P  
you tomorrow will go  
You'll go tomorrow.

In the above examples all the S's and P's are in person-concord.

Take the following examples:

ram ezon bhal lora asil

S                    C                    P  
Ram one good boy was  
Ram was a good boy.

---

15. Both gender concord and number concord practically do not operate in the syntax of Assamese. The category of person introduces the honorific dimension of the system of personal pronouns (section 5.74). Person is the point of origin of another three-term system of grade. All animate second person and third person pronouns are differentiated for three grades --honorific, equal and inferior, on the basis of particular verb forms with which they normally colligate. Each grade colligates with verb forms bearing different suffixes. See Pronouns section 5.74.

<u>rame</u>	<u>mod</u>	<u>khai</u>
S	O	P
Ram	wine	eats
Ram drinks wine.		

The nominal groups C (lora) and O (mod) do not have any concordial relation with the exponent of P. In the above examples, the primary structure (in terms of group) is the same:

NNV or nominal group + nominal group + verbal group

ram	ezon bhal lora	asil
rame	mod	khai <sup>16</sup>

Structurally the two sets are alike - NNV. The only obvious difference between the two sentences is that the nominal group at S of the second sentence has the postpositive particle e (rame). Neither O nor C participates in concordial relation with the verbal group.

There is no concord of number between the nominal group and the verbal group. Plurality is not an obligatory grammatical category.

---

6. It is interesting to note that the verb kha (to eat) has a variety of meanings. It has less restricted collocation. For example, bhat khai - he eats rice, pani khai (he drinks water) biri khai -(he smokes), gali khai (he is rebuked) baki khai (he buys things on credit) hi harik khale (he has spoiled Hari) uzuti khale (he tripped over), and many more.

<u>ẓzon manuh</u>	<u>ahise</u>
S	P
one man has	come
One man has	come.

<u>buhut manuh</u>	<u>ahise</u>
S	P
many men have	come
Many people have	come.

The definition of subject on the basis of concordial relationship is acceptable, because it helps us to identify the subject.

#### 4.183 Case-endings

According to some grammarians, the subject (S) is expounded by that nominal group which is in the nominative case. This definition works fairly well in the case of Sanskrit, where the case-endings specify which nominal group is the subject, which nominal group is the object, and which one the complement. This does not, however, prove true in the case of Assamese. In an Assamese clause, we may have two nominal groups in the nominative case; it might then, be difficult for us to say which nominal group is subject and which is object or complement, because as we have seen above, S, O, C, are filled by the same nominal group. Hence we observe that word-order is not crucial in the syntax of Assamese, and therefore positional occurrence of the elements is not a good guide. Let us take an example:



kexobor lora ram ezon bhal pondit asil  
                   S                                  C                                  P  
 of Keshab boy Ram one good scholar was  
 Ram, the son of Keshab, was a good scholar.

Here both (ram) and (pondit) are the nominative case. One might possibly get round this problem by using the test of insertability.<sup>17</sup> One may say that in this sentence, one cannot insert e (post-positive particle, subject-marker) into (ram) without bringing about consequential changes in the clause-pattern. We may, for example, say:

rame kitaphkhon pohrise  
           S                  O                  P  
 Ram the book has read  
 Ram has read the book.

The post-positive particle e in fact transforms the clause into a new pattern. Here we can safely say that (rame) alone is in the subjective case. But we cannot say:

\* kexobor lora rame bhal pondit asil  
                           S                                  C                                  P

---

17. ezon bhal manuh ezon bhal pondit  
                   S                                  C  
       one good man one good scholar  
       A good man is a good scholar.

In determining S and C, we are motivated by semantic considerations.

We are in fact left with two nominal groups, both in the nominative case. So the criterion of case-ending is inadequate, since it cannot tell us which nominal group is subject and which is object, Here of course, we are concerned with the <sup>clause</sup> sentence that has a subject and an object. We should mention that Assamese nouns show a 5-term system of case, as illustrated by the following paradigms. The exponent of each case suffix is underlined. Each case suffix fulfills a semantic role. They constitute the case-frame which shows the underlying structure of a sentence. Syntactic relationships are different from the semantic roles:

System of case <u>18</u> →	-nominative	-( <u>e</u> subject marker)
	-accusative	-( <u>k</u> object marker)
	-genitive	-( <u>r</u> possession marker)
	-ablative	-( <u>re</u> instrumental marker)
	-locative	-( <u>t</u> locative marker)

We can put the following example (manuh-man) in the following paradigms:

---

18. Charles Fillmore's system of case is worth mentioning here. According to Fillmore, the <sup>crucial</sup> ~~crucial~~ idea underlying all case grammar is that of analysing the nominal constituents of a sentence in terms of their semantic role in that sentence. These semantic roles are called cases. A sentence is a set of relations between a verb and a series of case-marked noun phrases. This series of noun phrases constitutes a set of roles which are useful in defining verbs in terms of the case-frames in which they occur.

<u>Case</u>	<u>manuh (man)</u>
nominative	manuhe manuh
accusative	manuhok manuh
genitive	manuhor
ablative	manuhere
locative	manuhot

rame horir bhajekok lathire murot kobale  
           S          O                  A          P

Ram Hari's brother with stick on the head hit  
 Ram hit Hari's brother on the head with a stick.

The above sentence in fact gives us a five-termed system of case-endings. The important thing to note here is that each case occurs only once other than by conjoining.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4.184 Sequence

In some languages, sequence has frequently been used as a criterion for defining the subject. This means defining the subject positionally with reference to some other element in the clause structure (usually, the predicator is taken as the nucleus). One can say that the exponent of subject is that nominal group which immediately precedes or follows the predicator, ~~or that~~

---

19. Conjoining is only possible between nominals in the same case, that is, having the same role.

occurs. In English clause structure, for example, it is a crucial criterion of the elements that it precedes P:

<u>The man</u>	<u>killed</u>	<u>the tiger</u>
S	P	O
N 1	V 2	N 3

<u>The tiger</u>	<u>killed</u>	<u>the man</u>
S	P	O
N 1	V 2	N 3

Here S comes before P, and O comes after it (except in thematic cases where O is initial).

There are three places and three elements. The exponent of P is the verbal group (killed). We can safely say that whatever operates at (1) is S and whatever operates at (3) is O. When the whole thing is reversed (The man killed the tiger, the tiger killed the man), even then the elements (S) and (O) remain in the same sequence relative to (P). It may now be said that (S) is crucially defined by position relative to (P).

In Assamese, sequence raises a very important problem. The elements of Assamese clause structure may be arranged in all possible ways. We may, however make a distinction between normal unemphatic<sup>20</sup> sequence

of elements, and marked variation of the normal sequence.

#### 4.1841 Unemphatic sequence

mor deutai mok kothato kole

S            Q        O        P  
my father me the word told  
My father told me about the matter

lorato kitap porisel

S        O        P  
the boy book read  
The boy read the book.

toi nahibi

S        P  
you don't come  
You (inferior) don't come.

#### 4.1842 Emphatic marked sequence

hitak rame bhal pai

O        S        P  
Sita Ram loves  
Ram loves Sita

mas t&o khai, monoh nekhai

O    S        P        O        P  
fish he eats meat not eat  
He eats fish, but not meat.

nahibi toi

P        S  
not come you (inferior)  
Don't come.

- 
20. Emphatic and unephatic are two term contrasts of the system of emphasis. We can emphasize a particular element in thr  e ways: by using emphatic particles, by unusual arrangement of word-order, and sometimes by repetition. Here we are concerned with the arrangement of word-order.

(The problems of marked and unmarked sequence will be discussed at some length in the section on word-order). Greenberg's notion of a dominant order is applicable to Assamese: "The vast majority of languages have several variant orders, but a single dominant one."<sup>21</sup> In the Assamese unmarked or dominant clause-structure, we may define the object as the nominal group coming in between (S) and (P), and subject as that nominal group which precedes (O). Greenberg's dominant order corresponds to the unmarked clause structure which is statistically more frequent.

In declarative sentences with a nominal subject and object, the only unmarked order is almost always one in which the subject precedes the object: S O P

#### 4.1843 Dominant sequence of elements (Where O<sup>22</sup>s involved)

Transitive clause structure:	S O P
Ditransitive clause structure:	S Q O P
Complementary transitive clause:	S O C P

The above are dominant clause structures with the element O. The positional order of O plays a significant semantic part in the structure.

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21. Joseph H. Greenberg, Some Universals of Language, pp. 60-61.

22. The distinction between O and Q is one of semantics rather than syntax. On the dimension of animacy O can be split into direct object (O) which is inanimate and indirect object (Q) which is animate. This is, however, a notional criterion. We have formal syntactic criteria too. Whereas O may or may not take the object-marker-k, Q invariably takes the object marker -k. Positionally Q precedes O. O is in focus when O precedes Q. The object of any transitive clause structure, whether it is animate or inanimate, is considered to be O. See also section 4.7.

4.185 Selection

In an Assamese clause it is the exponent of (P) which is crucial in identifying the subject. There seems to be a sort of natural selection relation, or a relation of mutual determination between the exponent of (P) and the exponent of (S). The subject is the nominal group which selects the form of the verbal group at (P).

Take the following clause structure:

clause structure	S O P
group structure	N N V    N <sub>a</sub> N <sub>b</sub> V

If we have a clause with a nominal group (N<sub>a</sub> and N<sub>b</sub>) and a verbal group V, and if we find a sort of selection between N<sub>a</sub> and V (that is, N<sub>a</sub> presupposes a particular form of V such that V can co-occur with N<sub>a</sub>), this selection relation between N<sub>a</sub> and V will remain unchanged, even when N<sub>a</sub>, N<sub>b</sub> and V are re-arranged in other possible ways. In order to understand this relation better, we must look at the secondary classes of the nominal group at (S), and at the verbal group at (P):

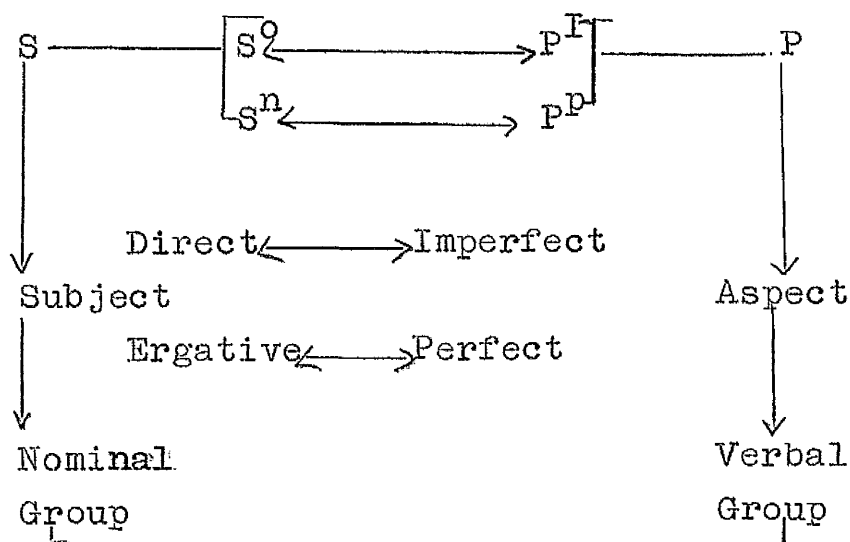
Primary elements of		
clause structure	S	P
Primary group classes	nominal	verbal

This symbol  $\boxed{\phantom{S^0}}$  stands for selection.

The symbol  $\curvearrowright$  stands for concord.

(S) and (P) may be broken into secondary elements which in turn can be expounded by the secondary classes of the nominal and verbal groups respectively.

### Selection Relation



In the above diagram  $S^0$  stands for direct subject, and  $S^n$  stands for ergative subject, while  $P^I$  stands for imperfect verbal group, and  $P^P$  stands for perfect verbal group. In an ergative construction, the subject selects the perfective aspect in the verbal group.

In this configuration we get the following selection relationships:



Examples:

$S^{\text{direct}}$	selects	$P^{\text{imperfect}}$	I	<u>rame</u>	<u>kitab</u>	<u>porhi</u>	<u>ase</u>
				S	O	P	
				Ram is reading books.			
$S^{\text{ergative}}$	selects	$P^{\text{perfect}}$	II	<u>duarkhon</u>	<u>khuli</u>	<u>gol</u>	
				S	P		
				The door has opened.			

We must make it clear that on the dimension of transitivity, we can have the subject as  $S^{\text{direct}}$  and  $S^{\text{ergative}}$ . The subject is direct when the basic pattern of organization is describable in terms of action and goal. The subject is ergative when the system of clause organization is more readily describable, not primarily in terms of action and goal, but rather in terms of cause and effect.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4.1851 How selection differs from concord

The selection relation is different from concord. For instance, the nominal group, exponent of S agrees

---

23. Halliday considers ergativity as a process-oriented construction and refers to it as a system of clause organization "more readily describable not primarily by causation. X is engaged in a process -- is it caused by X or not? This contrasts with a transitive form of organization where the roles are defined by extension: X is engaged in a process -- is it directed outside X or not? In all cases the ergative construction demands the presence of three elements: I, a transitive verb, II, an expressed object figuring as the grammatical subject, and III, the logical subject denoted differently from the way in which it occurs when <sup>paired</sup> paired with an intransitive verb!" W.K. Matthews, 'The Ergative Construction in Modern Indo-Aryan', Lingua 3, 1953, p.405.

with the exponent of P in person and grade. Concordial relation is a syntagmatic relation between two or more elements at which we make the same choice. Not only is there person concord between S and P, there is also grade concord between them.

apuni	ahibo	—	honorific	—you will come.
tumi	ahiba	—	equal	
toi	ahibi	—	inferior	

The system of grade	—	honorific
	—	equal
	—	inferior

Selection does not imply the same choice at two or more places in a structure; it means mutual accompaniment of two grammatical categories. For example, an ergative nominal group (at S) co-occurs with perfect verbal group at (P). An ergative subject never co-occurs with an imperfect aspect.

In clauses where S is expounded by a direct nominal group, we have a coincidence of selection and concordial relations as shown below:

<u>toi</u>	<u>bhat</u>	<u>kason</u>
S	O	P

you rice eat please  
Please (inferior) have your dinner.

<u>apuni</u>	<u>ahibodei</u>
S	P

you (honorific) will come, please  
(You) Please come.

In the above examples, we have a concordial relation between S and P. But inside the nominal group itself, we can have concordial relation in delicacy, for example:

ezon hunder lora ahise  
 $\begin{array}{ccc} m_1 & \curvearrowright & m_2 \\ & \text{S} & \text{P} \\ & \text{one beautiful boy} & \text{has come} \\ & \text{A handsome boy} & \text{has come.} \end{array}$

ezoni sundori sowali ahise  
 $\begin{array}{ccc} m_1 & \curvearrowright & m_2 \\ & \text{S} & \text{P} \\ & \text{one beautiful girl} & \text{has come.} \\ & \text{A beautiful girl} & \text{has come.} \end{array}$

Here we have gender-concord inside the nominal group. This will be discussed in a section of Chapter V. It is clear, however, from these examples that there is always a relation of mutual determination between the exponents of (S) and those of (P). Selection will be used as our primary criterion for the definition and delimitation of subject. We will, however, use concord where (S) is not shown by selection.

#### 4.186 Suffixation

One distinguishing feature of the nominal group at S is the suffix e. The noun-word which functions as the head of the nominal group at S has the potentiality

of suffixation by e.<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note that some verbs do not have this suffix at (S):

manuh more	absence of <u>e</u>
<u>S</u> <u>P</u>	
man dies	
Man dies	

manuhe kotha koi	presence of <u>e</u>
<u>S</u> <u>O</u> <u>P</u>	
man	
Man speaks (words).	

#### 4.19 What can operate at S

(a) One or more than one nominal group: This is a normal unmarked state of things.

One nominal group:

horu	lorate	gakhir	khaise
<u>S</u>		<u>O</u>	<u>P</u>
little boy	milk	is	eating
The little boy is drinking milk.			

---

24. The subject-marker e and its morphemic alternant i after vowels present us with a tough linguistic problem. In the absence of quantitative data, one must rely on intuition in order to make some general remarks about their distribution. The nature of the verb has something to do with its relation to the subject of the sentence. In both transitive and ditransitive clause structures, the subject-marker is obligatory. In the transitive clause structure, however, the subject-marker is optional; that is to say, some intransitive verbs take e or i, while others do not. However we do not have any formal criteria whatsoever which can separate intransitives with overt S from intransitives with zero suffix. Perceptive verbs (buz-understand, zan-to know) do take S with e or i; verbs of motion (ah-to come, za-to go) do not take overt e, subjects. Stative verbs (e.g. boh-to sit, hu-to sleep), on the other hand take overt subjects. But these are semantic criteria rather than syntactic ones. Hence the problem still remains unsolved.



however, a formal explanation. When the relation between the nominal group is additive, that is to say, when we have a number of nominal groups in list relation with or without a linking element ( $\neq$ ),<sup>25a</sup> the concordial or selection relation does not obtain between the individual nominal group and the verbal group, but between all the nominal groups taken together and the verbal group.

<u>ram</u>	<u>aurukexobe</u>	<u>bol</u>	<u>khelise</u>
h	+	+	h
	S	O	P

Ram and Keshab ball playing  
 Ram and Keshab are playing football.

<u>têo,</u>	<u>tumi</u>	<u>aru</u>	<u>moi</u>	<u>zam</u>
h	+	h	+	h
		S		P

he you and I shall go  
 You, he and I will go.

When we have two nominal groups, one apposed to the other, the post-positive particle can occur only once, and that too at the end of the second nominal group. The post-positive particle coming finally unites the two groups into one whole and together they enter into a selection relation with the verbal group:

<u>bali</u>	<u>mastoror</u>	<u>putek,</u>	<u>babule</u>	<u>bilatot</u>	<u>kam</u>	<u>kore</u>
	S					

Babul, the son of Bali who is a teacher works in England.

---

25a. (Section 3.6) The linking element at the sentence level is represented by the X and the linking element at the clause level is represented by +.

Here we cannot say \* puteke babule. Moreover they do not separately enter into a selection relation with the verbal group; taken individually they would select two different classes of the verbal group:

<u>prodhan</u>	<u>montrir</u>	<u>lora</u>	<u>tumi</u>	<u>unnoti</u>	<u>koribai</u>
	S		O		P
prime minister	boy	you	progress	surely	do
You, the son of the prime minister are sure to progress.					

#### 4.2 The element "object" (O)

The object is one of the primary elements of the Assamese clause structure. It is expounded by the primary classes 'nominal' of the unit group.

The distinguishing features of O are the following:

(a) In a normal unemphatic clause the object occurs between the subject and the predicator. We may say that the object is expounded by that nominal group which immediately precedes the verbal group (exponent of P) with no other nominal group coming in between.

(b) The exponent of O does not enter into a selection relation. But O does maintain both a grammatical as well as a semantic relationship with the verb. O in fact has logical functions in relation to both S and P.

(c) The nominal group at S may select an ergative construction, but the nominal group at O excludes the ergative. The object in a transitive expression becomes the grammatical subject in an ergative expression.<sup>26</sup>

(d) We have already defined our subject as that nominal group which selects the form of the verbal group at P. We may now say that the object is that nominal group which is not the subject and which has nominal position immediately before the predicator. But this criterion is not rigorous, for we are likely to confuse O with C. The confusion arises because of the fact that not all direct objects take the object-marker.

Take the following examples:

- i.    tʃo bhal kitapkhon porhisil  
       S            O                    P  
       he the good book read  
       He read the good book.
- ii.   tʃo bhal pondit asil  
       S            Ø C            P  
       he good scholar was  
       He was a good scholar.

---

26. The verb in an ergative expression is intransitive, but has the capacity of being transitive. This is so because in an ergative expression which is a nomino-verbal structure, there is no object. The logical object of a transitive structure becomes the grammatical subject of an ergative structure:

Transitive:	<u>rame</u>	<u>duarkhon</u>	<u>khulile</u>	Ergative:	<u>duarkhon</u>	<u>khuli</u>	<u>gc</u>
	S	O	P		S	P	
	Ram	has	opened the		The door	has	
	door				opened.		



Here both O and C are expounded by nominal groups. Both occur in between S and P. Both end with the post-positive zero suffix or bare dictionary entry forms. But on the other hand, we get the obvious difference between O and C expounded by nominal groups:

<u>hi</u>	<u>ramok</u>	<u>kobale</u>
S	O	P
he	Ram	hit
He hit Ram.		

<u>hi</u>	<u>bhal</u>	<u>satro</u>	<u>hobo</u>
S		C	P
he	good	student	will be
He will be a good student.			

Here O(ramok) is marked by objective marker /k/, whereas C is marked by zero suffix.

(e) It is easy to identify O in P-bound clause (i.e., a clause in which P is expounded by a non-finite verbal group). In this type of clause, O is expounded by that nominal group which always precedes the exponent of P.

<u>hi</u>	<u>bhat</u>	<u>kai</u>	<u>ghoroloi</u>	<u>gol</u>
S	O	N.P.	A	P
he	rice	having eaten	to home	went
He had his dinner and went home.				

N.P. Stands for non-finite predicator that is, participle.

Certainly we cannot say:

\* hi kai bhat ghoroloi gol

But surely we can say:

hi khale bhat  
he ate rice  
He had his dinner.

(f) When all is said and done, the most rigorous criterion of O is the post-positive suffix k (object marker). Not all objects take the object marker.<sup>27</sup> So we need some formal criteria with which to distinguish O:

rame kitap porhise  
S O P  
Ram book is reading  
Ram is reading books.

ram pondit asil  
S C P  
Ram scholar was  
Ram was a scholar.

27. Our observation is that the nature of the object as animate and inanimate has something to do with its relation to its object-marker -k. Take the following examples:

<u>gopale protiva bhal pai</u>	but	<u>gopale protivak bhal pai</u>
S O P		S O P
Gopal genius good get		Gopal Protiva good-get
Gopal loves genius		vGopal Loves Protiva (a girl's name)

Here the inanimate object protiva is realized by zero suffix but the animate object protivak is overtly marked. The following two examples illustrate this point clearly:

<u>rame horik khale</u>	but	<u>rame goru khale</u>
S O P		S O P
Ram Hari eats		Ram cow eats
Ram has spoiled Hari.		Ram has eaten beef.

Here again both O and C take bare dictionary entry forms with zero-suffix, but the difference is that in S (rame) there is a subject marker /e/ and in S (ram) there is not a subject-marker.

#### 4.21 Simple and Complex object

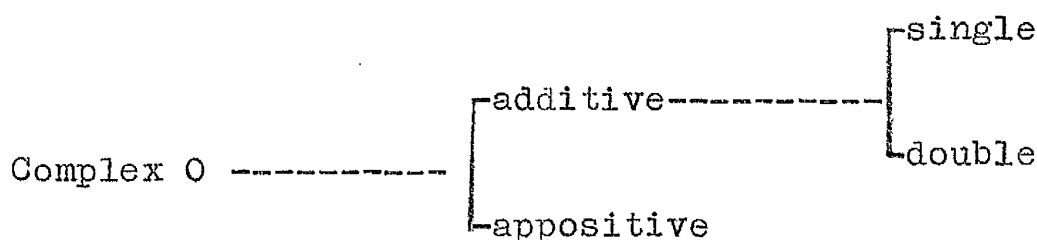
The object may be expounded by one or more than one nominal group. If it is expounded by one nominal group, it is simplex, that is, the exponential relation between class and element is simple in that a one-to-one relation is preserved.

For example,

S	O	P		S		O		P
				huruze		pohor		dije
				N		N		V

The sun light gives  
The sun gives light.

If the object is expounded by more than one nominal group, it is complex, that is, the exponential relation between class and element is complicated in that there is more than one nominal group: there may be ~~either~~ an additive or an appositive relationship. In a complex object we may have linkage expounded by a complex contour:



(a) Additive single O:

tɛkhete orunak aru tɛo bandhobihokolok matisil

S                      O                      P

he (honorific) Aruna and his/her girl friends invited  
He invited Aruna and her friends.

Here the contour of complex O is orunak aru tɛor  
bandhobihokolok, aru is the linking element

(b) Additive double O:<sup>28</sup>

tɛkhete orunak aru tɛor bandhobihokolok bhat khabloi matisil

S                      Q                      O                      P

he (honorific) Aruna and his/her girl friends rice to eat  
He invited Aruna and her friends to a dinner.

(c) Appositive:

raize bali masotorok bhal pai but not \*raize balik  
S                      O                      P                      mastorok bhal pai

people Bali the teacher love get  
People like Bali, the teacher.

28. Additive double O represents the expansion of the ditransitive clause structure. Double O is realized inanimate direct O and by the indirect object Q. One obvious linguistic feature is that both additive O's, single and double, are overtly marked. This is, however, not true of the appositive object. It is the object in apposition that takes the object-marker -k. The same is true of the complex S also. See above, section 4.191.

zodue ram dokanik kobale but not \*zodu ramak dokanik  
 S O P kobale.  
 Jadu Ram shopkeeper hit  
 Jadu hit Ram, the shopkeeper.

4.22 Of the pronouns, only those in the accusative case have the potentiality of operating at O. The pronominal objects<sup>29</sup> always take the object marker /k/. Pronominals in the accusative case can be <sup>shown</sup> shwen in the following matrix:

	singular	plural
1st person	moke (me)	amak amalokok us
2nd person	grade ----- -aponak-honorific -tomak-equal -tok-inferior -you	grade ----- -aponalokok -tomalikok -tohotok you
3rd person	grade ----- -tɛkhɛtok -tɛok tak-gender-	grade ----- -tɛokɛtok (them) -tɛok (them) -hihotok- -hihotok- -taihotok -eibilakok -houbilakak -hobilaka

these them

29. Apart from a semantic differential between a noun-object and a pronominal object, there is evidence of syntactic difference also, particularly in the arrangement of complex O:  
moi zodu hari aru ramak matiso but moi teok tomak aru tak  
 S O O + O P S O O + matiso O  
 P

I Jodu Hari and Ram called  
 I have invited Zodu, Hari  
 and Ram.

I him you and her called  
 I have invited you him  
 and her

.../continued

## Examples:

lorato	mok (me)	matasil	The boy called me
	aponak (you)		The boy called you (honorific)
	taik (her)		The boy called her (inferior)
	tomak (you)		The boy called you (equal).
	t khetok (him)		The boy called him (honorific)

the boy -----called.

4.23 Subdivision of O

We have a maximum of two Os in a clause. They are expounded by the ditransitive clause structure. At the primary degree of delicacy we call them all objects. By taking a step in delicacy we break O on the dimension of directness into two secondary chain elements. The nature of the object as animate or inanimate has somehow to do with the dimension of directness.<sup>30</sup>

Object--	O direct
	Q indirect

---

29. (continued) Here, in the series of noun-objects, only the last noun-object takes the object-marker, but in cases of pronominals all are overtly marked. For the sake of emphasis, all noun-objects can be overtly marked.

30. Although the dimension of directness is a syntactic criteria which establishes the distinction between O and Q, the dimension of animacy, that is, whether the object is animate or inanimate, is a semantic criterion. In fact both the criteria reinforce each other to pinpoint the distinction between O and Q. However we are more concerned here with the formal marks such as their position in relation to each other, the object marker k, and so forth than a subjective quality such as animacy. See below section 4.7.

There are two criteria for the establishment of O and Q at the secondary delicacy. First O may or may not take the object marker K but in case of Q, K is obligatory. Second, in an unmarked ditransitive clause structure, Q always precedes O. By taking further steps in delicacy we can break O on the dimension of extension into two more secondary chain elements - intensive O ( $O^I$ ) and extensive O ( $O^E$ ). The main distinction between  $O^I$  and  $O^E$  is that only the exponent of  $O^E$  can be suffixed by -K. In unmarked clause structure  $O^I$  always follows  $O^E$ .

Examples:

$O^I$       hi boliali korile  
           S           $O^I$           P  
           he madness did  
           He showed his madness.

$O^E$       hi kitapkhon porhise  
           he the book is reading  
           He is reading the book.

$O^E O^I$       hi amak tar bolialibor dekhuale  
           S       $O^E$                    $O^I$                   P  
           he us his of the madness showed  
           He showed us his madness.

$O^E O^E$       hi ramok kitapkhon dise  
           S       $O^E$                    $O^E$                   P  
           he Ram the book has given  
           He has given Ram the book.

There is a restriction of co-occurrence of  $O^I$ . We can not have two  $O^I$ s although we can have two  $O^I$ s with a Linking element in between.

$O^I + O^I$  hi boliali aru murkhami dekhual  
           S         $O^I$         +         $O^I$         P  
           he madness and foolishness showed  
           He showed madness and foolishness.

By taking another step in delicacy  $O^E$  may be subdivided into choice elements  $O^E$  definite  $O^E$  indefinite when the exponent of  $O^E$  is marked by the presence of (-K) it is definite, otherwise it is indefinite.<sup>31</sup>

OE (definite)    rame kukurtok dekhisil  
                   S         $O^E$         P  
                   Ram the dog saw  
                   Ram saw the dog.

OE (indefinite) rame kukur ta dekhisil  
                            $O^E$         P  
                           Ram one dog saw.  
                           He saw a dog.

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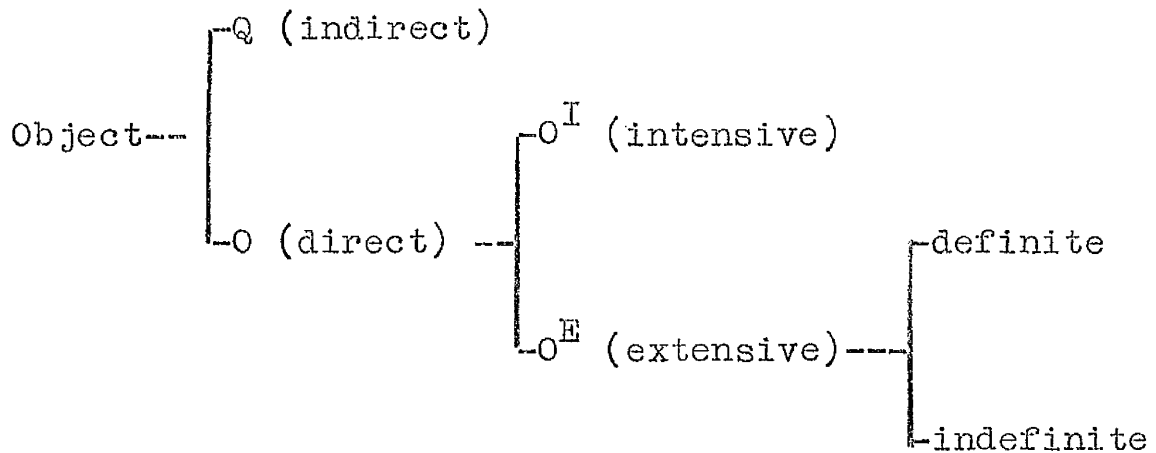
31. Syntactically Q and  $O^E$  definite are identical. However if we insert Q which naturally precedes  $O^E$ , the object marker  $O^E$  is dropped:

rame mok kukurto dekhuaisil  
           S    Q         $O^E$         P  
           Ram me the-dog showed  
           Ram showed me the dog.

Quite obviously, the sentence structure is ditransitive.



The following is the subdivision of O shown below diagrammatically;



As we have mentioned above (footnote 30), the dimension of directness and the dimension of animacy are the basis of the cross-classification of objects. The basis of the dimension of extension is countability of nouns. An intensive object is an ~~unc~~<sup>u</sup>countable noun while an extensive object is a countable noun. We have discussed countable nouns and uncountable nouns below (section 3.73).

#### 4.231 Object marker-k:

In case of indirect object (Q), object marker k is obligatory. Pronominal objects, proper noun objects and common noun (human) objects must take k. In other cases of O, if k is added to the object, certain focus is expected, that is object is in focus. Take the following examples:

moi teor horolota: bhal pao Focus: moi teor horolotak bhal pa  
 S O<sup>I</sup> P S O<sup>I</sup> P  
 I his simplicity good get I his simplicity good get  
 I like his simplicity. I like his simplicity.

rame mok kukurto dekhual Focus: rame mok kukurtok dekhual  
 S Q O P S Q O P  
 Ram me the-dog showed Ram me the-dog showed  
 Ram showed me the dog. Ram showed me the dog.

herolota and kukurto are out of focus; horolotak and kukurtok are in focus because of the object marker k.

#### 4.232 What can occur at O?

(a) Nominal group: One or more than one nominal group. This is the normal unmarked state of affairs:

moi lorazonok dekhiso  
 S O P  
 I the boy have seen.  
 I have seen the boy.

apuni eiloratok aru hou soalizonik matibo  
 S O P  
 you these boys and those girls will call  
 You will please invite this boy and that girl.

(b) Pronominal group (as we have seen in section 4.22 above) can occur at O:

moi tok bhal napao  
 S O P  
 I you (inferior) love not get  
 I don't like you.

hi taik bhal pai  
S O P  
he her love get  
He loves her.

(c) Nominalized clause: A bound clause rank-shifted to h in the structure of a nominal group.

Structure	S	O	P
	R/S clause		

gopale    moize    ahim    zane  
                    S                    P

---

          S                    O                    P

Gopal I that shall come know  
Gopal knows that I'm coming.

<u>tar</u>	<u>lorato</u>	ze	<u>budhi</u>	<u>jok</u>	<u>hob</u>	moi	buziso
S			A		P		
<hr/>						<hr/>	<hr/>
R/S clause O						S	P
his the boy that good will be I understand							
His son, I understand, is going to be intelligent.							

### 4.3 The Element P

The predicator is one of the primary elements in Assamese clause structure. P is, as has been shown before, expounded by the class verbal of the unit: group. It may be said that unlike English, P is not an obligatory element in the major clause structure. Logically, of course, any proposition is impossible without a predicator. Structurally P (section 4.16) is peripheral, but semantically it is nodal.

tɕo	ezonebhal	manuh	(hoi)
S		C	(P)

he one good man is  
He is a good man.

hi	bor	sotur	(hoi)
S		A	(P)

he very clever is  
He is very clever.

It is important to note that none of the elements (SOCAP) are obligatory except perhaps P. As we have seen above, P is not obligatory in the equational clause structure, nor is it in the existential clause structure. We have defined subject (S) as that primary element which enters into a selection relation of mutual determination with the predicator, in other words, S selects the form of the verbal group at P. We may now define the predicator as that verbal group whose form is selected by the subject.

#### 4.31 Simplex and complex:

The class 'verbal' of the unit 'group' stands in a one-to-one relation with the element P in clause structure. This does not, however, exclude the possibility of having more than one verbal group joined together by a co-ordinator as exponent of P. 'What enters into grammatical relations is not the item itself considered as a formal realization but the class which is not a list of formal items but an abstraction from them'. Where P is expounded by one

verbal group, the exponential relation is simple: one element, to one verbal group. Where it is expounded by more than one verbal group, the exponential relation is complex in the sense that an element of structure is expounded by more than one member of the same class of the unit next below. The internal relation between the members of the same class is one of co-ordination. We may have a number of verbal groups in a series joined by a linker (such as i: loi); all of them taken together then function as exponent of P.

tlo kitaphon porhihex korile  
           S          O                  P

he the book reading finish has done  
 He has finished reading the book.

poromai bhat khaboloi gol  
           S          O                  P

Parama rice to eat has gone  
 Parama has gone for lunch.

The class is an abstraction from formal items. So whether we have one formal item or a string of formal items as the exponent of P is immaterial to the relation between the class verbal of the element P. After we have established this primary relation between the class verb of the unit group and the element P in the structure of clause, we would state the relation of co-ordination between different verbal groups at P. If the nominal group at S is ergative, then each verbal group at P in the clause must be perfect.

Simplex

One verbal group:

kesuatoe gakhir khaise  
           S          O          P  
 the baby milk is eating  
 The boy is drinking milk.

mridulai sithi likhise  
           S          O          P  
 Mridula letter has written  
 Mridula is writing letters.

Complex

Two verbal groups:

zodi moi taloi zao aru tat thako, moi tomaloi likhim  
           S      A      P                  P  
 if I there go and there stay I to you shall write  
 If I go there and stay there I'll write to you.

(complex contour P P: P linked to another P)

tumi aha aru soa  
           P          P  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
       S          P  
 you come and see  
 (P is expounded by PF)

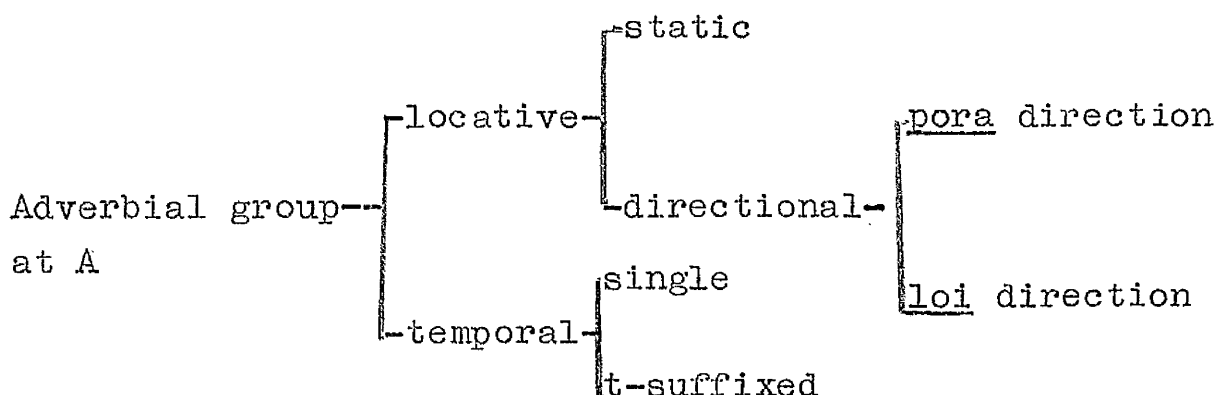
4.4 The element adjunct (A)

The adjunct is that primary element of Assamese clause structure which is expounded by the class

adverbial of the unit: Group. We might define the adverbial group as that primary class of the unit group which operates at A in the clause structure. We must, however, note that the relation between the clause-structure is not biunique, for we may have a nominal group with case-endings (tloi), as well as the adjectivals operating at A.

#### 4.41 What can occur at A?

(a) Adverbial group: Two kinds of adverbials can occur at A: locative and temporal. Both the locative and the temporal have the following subdivision:



#### 4.42 Some examples of the locative phrase

<u>tξo</u>	<u>bilatot</u>	<u>thake</u>
S	A	P
he	in England	stays
He stays in England.		





#### 4.5 The element complement (C)

The element complement is that primary element of Assamese clause structure which is expounded by the class nominal group which operates at S as well as at O. It operates at C also. The criteria that distinguish between the nominal group at C and the nominal group at S or O are suffixation & word-order. The distinctive feature of S is the subject marker ə and that of O is the object-marker K. The zero suffix is the distinctive feature of C, that is, we get only the dictionary entry form of the noun. In normal unmarked order, S always precedes C. If, however, C precedes S, we get the element complement in focus.

##### 4.51 What can occur at C?

The word class noun occurs at C. Both in equational as well as complementative clause structures C is expounded by the noun class with 'zero suffix'. The pronoun which is the subclass of the noun can also occur at C.

Examples:

Equational clause with zero P:

<u>ram</u>	<u>pondit</u>
S	C
Ram scholar	
Ram is a scholar.	

tumi mor bhai  
           S      C  
mor bhai tumi (complement in focus)  
           C      S  
 my brother you  
 You are my brother.

Complement<sup>ative</sup> clause:

ami tɕok hobhapoti patilo  
           S      O          C      P  
 we him president made  
 We made him president.

#### 4.52 Double complement

The complements may occur one after another in succession, but their relationship is one of apposition.

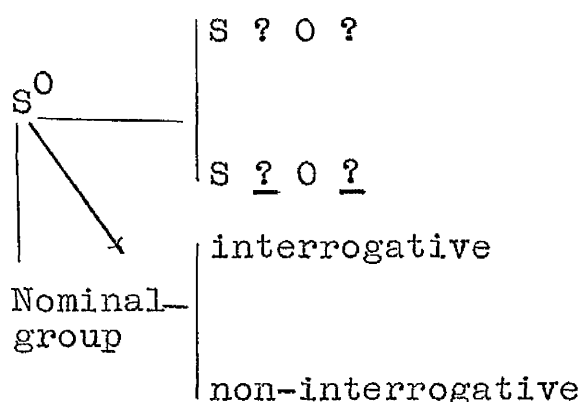
hou zon ram dokani  
           S      C      C  
 that one Ram shop-keeper  
 That one is Ram the shop-keeper.

#### ~~4.6 Rank-shifted clause~~

~~Rank-shift describes the situation when a given unit (for example, a clause) functions as an element in the structure of another unit of the same rank, or as an element in the structure of a unit of a lower rank.~~

4.6 The systems of interrogatives at S and O

S and O may be subdivided into S<sup>interrogative</sup>, O<sup>interrogative</sup>, S<sup>non-interrogative</sup>, and O<sup>non-interrogative</sup>, thereby yielding a system of two terms: interrogatives and non-interrogatives. The basis for making this distinction is that only S<sup>interrogative</sup> and O<sup>interrogative</sup> are expounded by the secondary class; interrogative nominal group (that is, a group containing a K-word, such as kon, ki, kak and so forth). The symbol ? stands for the interrogative and ? non-interrogative:



Examples of S<sup>?</sup> and O<sup>?</sup>:

S<sup>?</sup>: kon kone (who, which)

O<sup>?</sup>: kak, ki (whom, which)

kon ghoroloi gol?  
 who to home has gone  
 Who has gone home?

tomak ki lage?  
 you what want  
 What do you want?

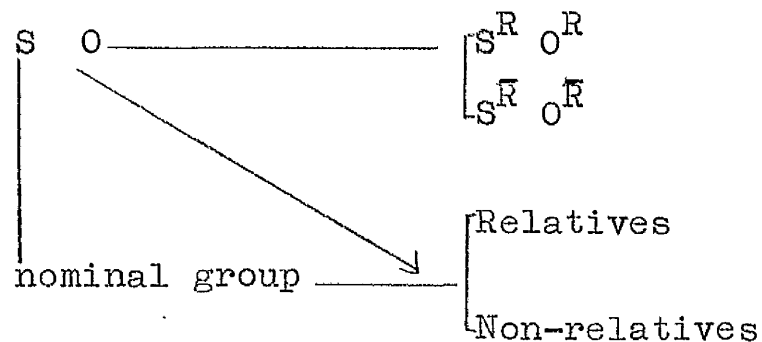
A further problem is poised in connection with the interrogative. In equational clause structure, it is difficult to establish formal criteria to distinguish S from C. Take the following example:

<u>teo</u>	<u>kon</u>		without semantic shift we can say:
S	C	<u>kon</u>	<u>teo</u>
he	who	S	C
Who	is he?	Who	is he?

Here it is not the form but the function which determines which is S and which is C.

4.61 The system of Relatives at S and O

We find a system of two terms, relatives and non-relatives:



Examples:

S<sup>R</sup>: zone zie (who) zar (whose)  
 O<sup>R</sup>: zake (whom) zi (what)

<u>zone</u>	<u>zi</u>	<u>khoze</u>	<u>t o</u>	<u>hei</u>	<u>pabo</u>
S <sup>R</sup>	O <sup>R</sup>	P	S	O	P
β			α		

who ever what wants he that will get

<u>zikhon</u>	<u>kitab</u>	<u>moi</u>	<u>bisarisilo</u>	<u>hei</u>	<u>khon</u>	<u>palo</u>
O <sup>R</sup>		S	P	O	P	
β			α			

which one book I looked for that one (I) got  
 I got the book, the one which I was looking for.

α is always preceded by β which ~~and~~ is initiated by relatives either at S or O, or at both. However, some semantic shift is attributable to the change in the sentence structure, namely, <sup>when α</sup> precedes β. We find this structure in written Assamese, particularly in poetry, rather than in spoken Assamese.

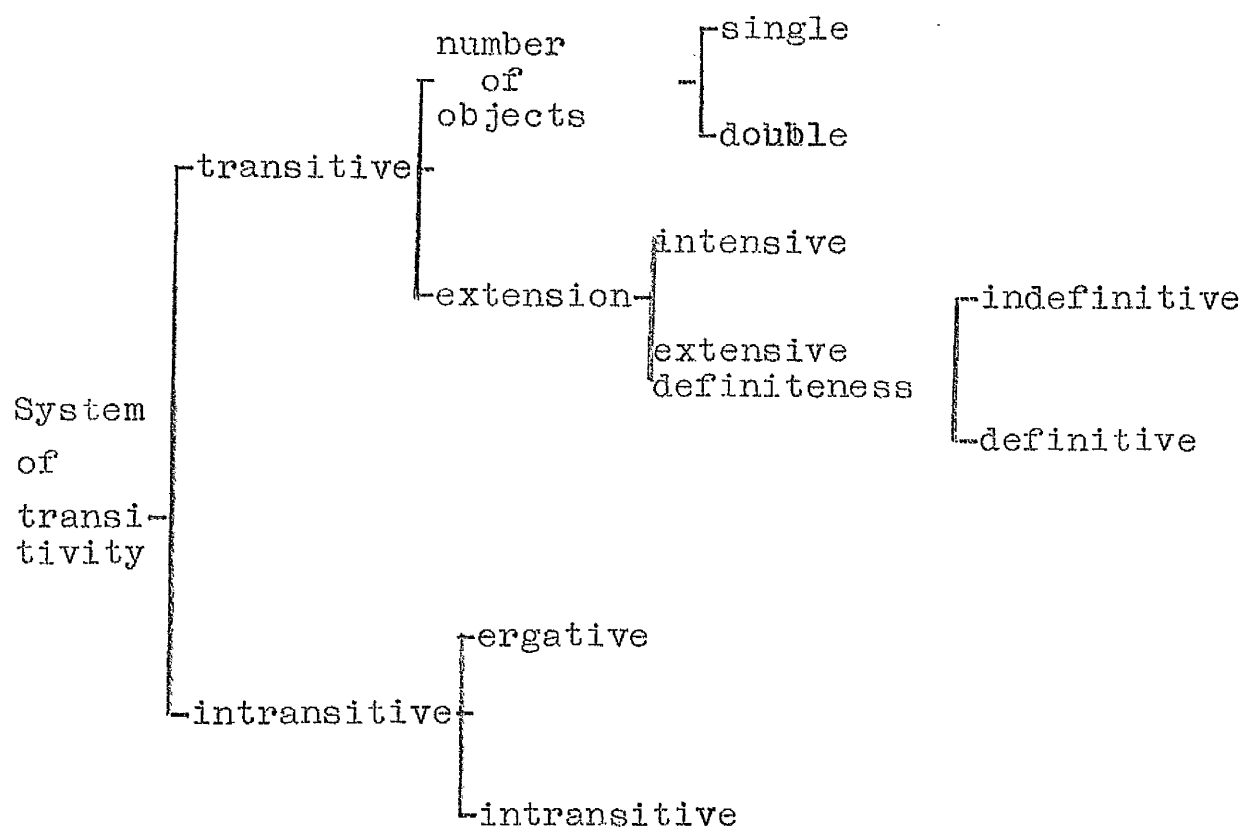
#### 4.7 The system of transitivity<sup>32</sup>

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32. The traditional notion of transitivity is an activity which proceeds from an actor to a goal, and there is some semantic basis for it. But to Halliday the system of transitivity is not merely an actor-goal analysis. Halliday's transitivity functions are Fillmore's "deep cases". The three types of transitivity role-process, participiant, circumstant ~~q~~-correspond to the three major word-classes-verb, noun and adverb.

Both independent and dependent clauses carry the system of transitivity which has two terms—transitive and intransitive. The transitive clause is marked by the presence of object(s) and the intransitive clause by its absence. The transitive clause may be single or double, depending on the number of objects. On the dimension of extension, it may be subdivided into transitive clause containing an intensive object and transitive clause with an extensive object. The latter may again be subdivided into transitive extensive definite and transitive extensive indefinite.

Diagrammatically;



#### 4.8 The system of theme and the system of emphasis:

Theme is the grammar of message. "It is, as it were, the peg on which message is hung."<sup>33</sup> Theme is expressed by word-order, sequence and emphasis.

#### 4.81 Word-order:

It is important to say something about the word-order of Assamese, and also about deviations from normal word-order. The fundamental feature of English word-order for example is that the subject is followed by the predicate; take the following two sentences:

John saw Henry.  
Henry saw John.

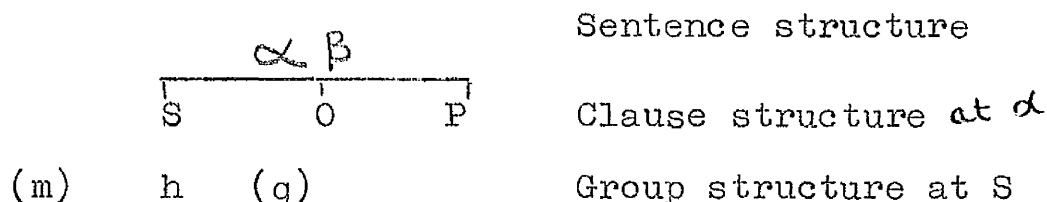
Here, the change in word-order is responsible for the change in meaning. The normal word-order in English is:

Jack	loves	Jill.			
subject	verb	object	S	P	O
(S)	(V)	(O)			
Noun	verb	noun	N	V	N

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33. Halliday, "Language Structure and Language Function" New Horizons in Linguistics, John Lyons p.161. There is a good deal of overlap between thematization, topicalization and focus. The confusion resulting from excessive terminology can be avoided if we use the cover term prominence. Thematization, topicalization and focus represent different aspects of prominence in the sentence structure. We have made below an attempt at the formalization of these terms.

We are not interested in examining word-order. We are interested in examining the order of elements in the structure of each unit. For example, the sequence of independent and dependent clauses in sentence structure; of subject, object, predicator, complement and adjunct in clause structure; of modifier, head, and qualifier in the structure of nominal group, and so on. Diagrammatically:



The morpheme being the smallest unit on the rank-scale, it has no structure and the question of order does not arise there. Within the framework of our grammar, word is a unit operating at 'places' in the structure of the group. By 'word-order' therefore, we mean the order in which words pattern in groups. The positional relations among subject, object, and predicator will be accounted for by the sequence or order of elements in clause structure.

#### 4.82 Sequence and Order:

It is useful to make a clear distinction between sequence and order. Order may be used to mean the formal relation between items which are carried by



linear progression at primary delicacy. If we have three items, X, Y, Z arranged as XYZ, we may say that the ordered relation between them is that the Y comes after X and Z comes after Y; or we may say that X is initial, Y medial, and Z final. Order is variable without change of meaning; sequence is not. Order is at a higher degree of abstraction than sequence. The sequential relation between elements may change without affecting the order of elements at primary delicacy in any way. Order is wholly determined by sequence. There is a deep underlying structure of each element which is expounded by sequence. Sequence is the internal structure of elements, which are arranged in order in primary delicacy. That S and O are structural features of Assamese is shown by their case markers. Each of them has the same internal structure. "Elements of structure .... share a mutual expectancy in order which is not merely a sequence. The dimension of order therefore "is very different from the successivity of bits and pieces in an unidimensional time-sequence."<sup>34</sup>

There are however instances "where an element of structure is identified as such solely by reference to formal sequence; where the element is defined by place stated as absolute or relative position in sequence". In English, we may say that exponent of S is that nominal group which precedes the verbal group with no

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<sup>34</sup>. J.R. Firth, "A Synopsis of Linguistic Theory", p.5 and p.17.

other nominal group in between. "In English clause structure it is a crucial criterion of the element S that it precedes P in sequence".<sup>35</sup>

In a Sanskrit clause structure, order is not crucial to the definition of the elements. An example may be given here:

<u>noroh</u>	<u>bjaghrom</u>	<u>honti</u>
S	O	P
man	tiger	kills
The man kills the tiger.		

<u>bjaghrom</u>	<u>honti</u>	<u>noroh</u>
O	P	S
the	tiger	kills man
The man kills the tiger.		

<u>honti</u>	<u>bjaghrom</u>	<u>noroh</u>
P	O	S
kills	the tiger	the man
The man kills the tiger.		

Here the order of the various elements is comparatively free; the function of every slot is indicated by distribution with bound morphemes attached to its fillers

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35. Halliday "Categories", p.257 and p.258. Unlike English syntactic structures, which are place-ordered (that is to say, elements are ordered like beads on a string), Assamese syntactic structures are layered and sequence-oriented. There is very little semantic shift if P precedes S in an Assamese clause structure. This is a characteristic of order. But inside the nominal group S, we have an inner arrangement of the immediate constituents of the nominal group. This internal arrangement is what we call sequence. This is crucial in distinguishing the two. Order represents the part-whole relationship of the elements to the unit while sequence represents the part-part relationships within unit structure.

(case markers, for example). The order of elements is relatively insignificant. In highly inflected languages such as Sanskrit, order seems to be a rhetorical rather than a strictly grammatical principle. Different languages exploit sequence and order for different purposes. In certain languages, sequence may be used criterially to define certain elements; in certain other languages, sequence may be a crucial property of structure, that is, a change in the sequence of elements might mean a change in structure. Halliday remarks: "The sequence in which items occur may or may not be a crucial property of the structure in question."<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.821 The normal order and the abnormal order

The degree to which word-order is exploited for functional purposes differs from language to language. The possibilities and the problems of functional exploitation of word-order in the sentence concerns the structure of the language itself.

In each language, it is possible to identify the normal unmarked order of clause structure. This may be done either on the basis of statistics or on the basis of the intuitions of native speakers of the language. The identification carried out can study

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36. Halliday, "Chain and Choice," p.4.

all abnormal arrangements of elements. The normal word order is formed by grammatically set constructions and normal patterns. Abnormal word-orders arise from functional variants of normal sentence patterns. An abnormal word-order signals a semantic shift. Normal word-order and abnormal word-order function together to create contrasts by prominence. Making ammove in delicacy, normal and abnormal can be split up into unmarked and marked. These prominent contrasts have been further discussed below (4.83).

Order does not play a crucial part in the definition of elements of Assamese clause structure. The elements can be arranged in all possible ways. Let us take the three primary elements S O P. We are deliberately leaving A(djunct) out because it has no effect on the scale of probability at primary delicacy.

All clause structures can be stated as combinations of these three elements in different orders:

	Structure
<u>rame</u> <u>bhat</u> <u>khale</u> S O P	SOP
<u>bhat</u> <u>rame</u> <u>khale</u> O S P	OSP
<u>rame</u> <u>khale</u> <u>bhat</u> S P O	SPO
<u>bhat</u> <u>khale</u> <u>rame</u> O P S	OPS

<u>khale</u>	<u>rame</u>	<u>bhat</u>	
P	S	O	PSO

<u>khale</u>	<u>bhat</u>	<u>rame</u>	
P	O	S	POS

Ram has eaten rice.

i.	SOP	common
ii.	OSP	
iii.	SPO	Scale of probability
iv.	OPS	
v.	PSO	
vi.	POS	uncommon

The probability scale takes the form of a cline with common and uncommon as its two ends. At clause level, what is talked about is theme. The theme is the peg on which the message is hung. In the above clause structures theme is the first element. But in a normal clause structure S is the unmarked theme and contrasts with marked themes such as O in OSP. There is a problem in knowing how much semantic shift is attributable to these changes of order in clause structure.

All these clauses are possible, they can be stated in probability terms. i and ii are the usual clause structures; they may be called dominant clause structures. vi is certainly uncommon, although it is not improbable. These combinations of S O & P do not mean the same thing. Perhaps no two different arrangements of elements are exactly alike in meaning. We

may quote Velma Pickett: "Probably order variations are seldom if every completely 'free' in the sense of making any difference in meaning the term 'stylistic variation' is frequently applied to intangible differences of meaning between variant order".<sup>37</sup>

#### 4.83 Theme and emphasis

Transitivity is the grammar of process just as mood is the grammar of speech function and theme is the grammar of message.

Take the following sentence:

<u>rame</u>	<u>horik</u>	<u>kobale</u>
S	O	P
Ram	Hari	hit
Ram	hit	Har.

Here the common structure is SOP with O occurring medially. As we have mentioned above, O can occur initially or finally, as well, so that we can have two other structures composed of the same elements.

S O P

O S P

S P O

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37. V. Picket, Introduction to the study of Grammatical Structure  
Morphology and Syntax, SIC  
 Santa Ana, 1956, P.36

Here the front-shifting of O and backshifting of O carry two different meanings.

First: a change in structure

Second: a change in meaning.

We can explain this shift in terms of emphasis. Emphasis may be expressed positionally in two ways:

(a) By putting the word in any abnormal, that is, unexpected position (b) by putting the word before the others, if possible at the beginning of the sentence. This second one is of course the most general way of making a word prominent. But the first is also a general principle of emphasis - making a word conspicuous by putting it in any abnormal position (other than initial). Thus the word whose normal position is front or mid, may be made emphatic by placing it at the end. This we may call emphatic end-position.

Assamese allows perhaps the greatest possible liberty of deviation from the normal order, for the sake of emphasis or to meet the demands of metre in poetry or of rhythm even in prose. In general, a word is rendered emphatic in proportion to the distance it is placed from its normal position in the sentence.

The usual order of elements in the clause is:

Subject+Indirect object+Direct object+Predicator  
 S + Q + O + P

gopale mok kitapkhon dise  
           S      Q      O      P  
 Gopalme the book has given  
 Gopal has given me the book.

If S, for example, is to be rendered emphatic or put in focus, then S is to be placed away from its normal position. The further S is away from its normal position, the more emphatic it becomes. The degree of emphasis is in proportion to the distance it is placed from the normal position. The syntactic shift of S will be followed by an appreciable semantic shift. Take the following sentence, and put S in focus:

make kesuatok gakhir khuaise  
       S          Q      O      P  
       the mother the baby milk made eating  
       The mother is feeding the baby with milk.

kesuatok make gakhir khuaise  
           Q      S      O      P  
kesuatok gakhir make khuaise  
           Q      O      S      P  
kesuatok gakhir khuaise make  
           Q      O      P      S

The further S is placed from its normal position, the more semantic shift is involved. However there is a problem in knowing how much semantic shift should be attributable to the change of word order in the clause structure.



4.831 Topic and Comment

We shall concentrate on only three primary places in clause structure in order to show the traditional topic-comment distinction. Take the following neutral clause or structure:

<u>gopale</u>	<u>kitapkhon</u>	<u>porhise</u>
S	O	P
Gopal the book has read		
Gopal has read the book.		

The initial place (S) is the place of theme or topic ... (the given).

The medial place (O) is the place of emphasis or comment (the new).

The final place (P) is the neutral place. This applies to P only.

S or O is not neutral when it is the final place.

Contextually theme would mean 'the given'; it is what the speaker is going to talk about. Whatever comes after is the new or the comment on the topic. Halliday prefers the functional terms given and new to topic and comment.

It is generally thought the subject and the topic are always identical, but in fact this is not true. "For though there is often correspondence, a linguistic subject may not be the topic of a sentence, not the topic expressed by linguistic subject."<sup>38</sup>

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38. Barbara Strang, The Structure of Modern English, 1962, p.71.

We distinguish initial position as theme or given (in context) and non-initial as new. The new may be, if extra-positional, emphatic. Thus, according to our analysis, theme and emphasis are formally defined. The theme is marked by initial position, and emphasis by extra-position as the second element always carrying the tonic. Emphasis is expounded both by sequence and by tonicity. Whereas tonicity is phonological realization, sequence is syntactic realization of thematic variations.

#### 4.84 Schematization of the thematic and the emphatic

The normal order of elements in Assamese clause structure is S (initially) O (medially) and P (finally). SOP may therefore be regarded as neutral structure. Statistically it is the most frequent in occurrence. Before we talk of the schematization of the possible combinations of thematic and emphatic elements perhaps we should look into the logical primes that a normal declarative sentence is built on. Any normal sentence is built on the basis of predication, that is, something new stated or predicated, of something known. This results in a basically binary form of predication. The basis of the predication (called here theme TH) is the usual starting point; it is something which is in the given situation either known, most at hand or most obvious. The nucleus of predication (N) contains the new contribution, the statement concerning theme.

From this follows that the normal order of the semantic elements in a declarative sentence is TH-N (that is, theme followed by nucleus). This is the so-called objective order. The opposite order N-TH is the so-called subjective order.

The possible combinations of emphatic and thematic elements may now be schematized in the following way.

(a) Any order of the formal elements corresponding to the subjective order of the semantic elements TH-N is unmarked.

(b) Any word order pattern corresponding to the subjective order N-TH is marked.

Theme	Emphasis	Structure	Exponent
S	-	SOP (unmarked)	$\frac{t\xi o}{S} \frac{bhat}{O} \frac{khale}{P}$
S	P	SPO (marked)	$\frac{t\xi o}{S} \frac{khale}{P} \frac{bhat}{O}$
O	+	OPS (unmarked)	$\frac{bhat}{O} \frac{khale}{P} \frac{t\xi o}{S}$
O	S	OSP (marked)	$\frac{bhat}{O} \frac{t\xi o}{S} \frac{khale}{P}$
P	-	PSO (unmarked)	$\frac{khale}{P} \frac{t\xi o}{S} \frac{bhat}{O}$
P	O	POS (marked)	$\frac{khale}{P} \frac{bhat}{O} \frac{t\xi o}{S}$

He had his dinner.

If we take S as the given or theme (that is, if the initial place is filled by S) we have a choice.

gopale hitak bhalpai  
           S          O          P  
 Gopal Sita loves  
 Gopal loves Sita.

gopale bhalpai hitak  
           S          P          O  
 Gopal loves Sita  
 Gopal loves Sita.

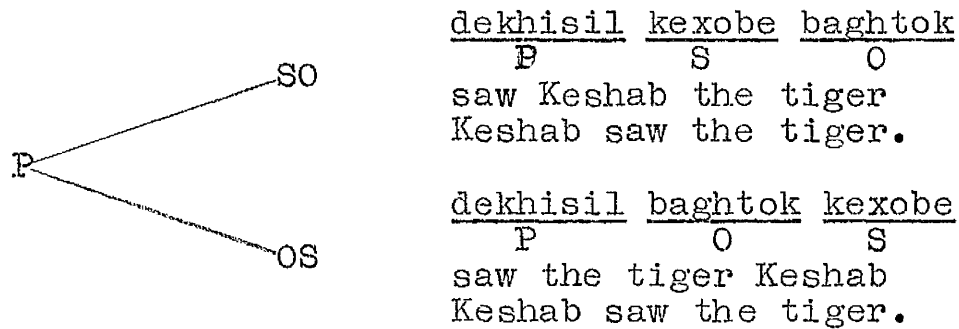
Here SOP represents the normal or unmarked sequence of elements in an Assamese clause. SPO represents the marked sequence of elements, because P has been shifted from its normal final position to the medial emphatic position.

If we have O theme (that is, if we have O initially) we have a choice between OPS and OSP.

	<p><u>sithi</u> <u>likhiso</u> <u>moi</u>                  O          <b>B</b>          S        letter am writing I        I am writing letters.</p>
	<p><u>Sithi</u> <u>moi</u> <u>likhiso</u>                  O          S          P        letter I am writing        I am writing letters.</p>

With place one taken by O, the normal unmarked sequence of elements is OPS. OSP represents the marked sequence of elements, and here emphasis is carried by S.

Similarly, if we have P initially (that is thematic), we have a choice between PSO and POS.



The former clause structure is unmarked but the latter one is marked (POS) where emphasis is carried by O. The basis for making this statement is that with the initial place filled by P, the normal sequence of elements would be PSO: and the emphatic sequence of elements would be POS, because O has been shifted from its unmarked final position.

Theme and emphasis are independently variable; we can keep one constant and vary the other. On the dimension of theme, we may have the following class classes.

- (a) S-theme clauses: emphasis carried by P
- (b) O-theme clauses: emphasis carried by S
- (c) P-theme clauses: emphasis carried by O

#### 4.9 Rankshifted clause

There is a one-to-one relation between the elements of structure of a unit and the classes of the unit next below. Rankshift is a case of departure from this relation. Classes of each rank enter into a structure of the rank immediately above, that is, (as we have noted in the chapter II) morpheme classes in word structure, word classes in group structure, group classes in clause structure and clause classes in sentence structure. In rankshift this relation is broken. An item is said to be rankshifted if it is found in the structure of a unit whose rank is equal to, or lower than, that of the unit of which the item is a member. This kind of departure from one-to-one relation between elements has been termed downgrading by A.A. Hill.<sup>39</sup> Halliday has described the rankshift phenomenon in the following classes entering into a structure of their own rank or even of lower rank than themselves "Rankshift may therefore be regarded as a name for that type of recursive structure, which cuts across the scale of rank."<sup>40</sup>

In Assamese there are certain dependent clauses which, instead of operating in the sentence structure, operate in the structure of nominal group. The

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39. A.A. Hill: "Downgrading consists in a reduction of status, for instance, from that of independent sentence to that of a sentence element within a large sentence." Introduction to Linguistic Structure P.357

40. Halliday, 'Chain and Choice' pp. 13-14.

structure of the nominal group, as we have discussed it in Chapter V, is (m) h (q). A clause can operate either in the place of m or in the place of q, m being the modifier, q the qualifier. The rankshifted clauses may be called attributive clauses functioning as satellite elements in the nominal group. P is the obligatory element in the attributive clauses. A rankshifted clause can function at S, O and C in the structure of a clause.

#### 4.91 Rankshifted clause at m in the Nominal Group

Rankshift is fairly common at m in the nominal group. The following examples show a clause functioning at m within the nominal group:

kali	zizon	manuh	ahisil	etia	ahise
	m		h		
<hr/>					
		S		A	P
yesterday which man came now has come					
The man who came yesterday has come now.					

clause structure:        S    A    P

                         m   h  
                         R/S Clause

Here we have nominal group with the structure mh. The exponent of h (head) is manuh and that of m (modifier) is 'kali zizon...ahisil' which is a dependent clause having the structure ASP. Normally a dependent

clause operates within a sentence structure. So one may say that here we have a rankshift dependent clause operating at m in the nominal group structure. In Assamese, one finds many rankshifted clauses operating at m inside nominal groups. The frequency of occurrence at m is rather a descriptive gerund and a rankshifted clause which can be discontinuous.

The descriptive gerund: (a)

sukot bohithoka soalizonik soa

gerund h \_\_\_\_\_  
O P

in the corner sitting the girl look at  
Look at the girl in the corner.

The symbol R/S === stands for a rankshifted clause

=== house sokot soalizoni bohi ase taikoi soa

\_\_\_\_\_ O P

that in the corner the girl is sitting her look at  
Look at the girl who is sitting in the corner.

kam kora lorato keni gol  
gerund

\_\_\_\_\_ S P

work doing the boy where has gone  
Where is the boy, who was working?

=== zito lorai kam kore keni gol

s o p \_\_\_\_\_  
S P

which boy work does where has gone  
Where is the boy who does the job?

poa pois khini mokei nate  
gerund O O P

\_\_\_\_\_ S

got money me not suffice  
The money I get is not sufficient for me.



=== zikhini poisa pao mokei nate

O

P

S

O

P

which money (I) get not even me suffice  
What I get is not enough, even for me.

#### 4.92 Rankshifted clause at q in the Nominal group

Rankshift in spoken Assamese is not very frequent at q in the nominal group. In written Assamese, however, it is not unusual.

onjolir bhoni<sub>h</sub>jek zak tumi bhal powa azi gol

h

O

S

P

P

S

of Anjali sister who you love today has gone  
Anjali's sister whom you love has gone today.

Clause Structure:

S

P

Group Structure

m

h

q

d

R/S clause

The rankshifted clause at m may be discontinuous, but the rankshifted clause at q gives us the regular unity of the clause structure:

mor rona b<sub>g</sub>gto emah agote ze kinisilo azi naikia hol

O

A

P

A

P

S

my red bag one month ago bought today disappeared  
My red bag, which I bought a month ago, has  
disappeared today.

Clause Structure:

S

A

P

m

h

q

de

R/S clause

## Chapter V

THE NOMINAL GROUP

## 5.1

The nominal group is that primary class of unit group which operates at S O and C in clause-structure. Morphologically it is a grouping of the unit next below, that is, of words.

5.11 Primary elements of the structure of the Nominal group:

The primary elements of structure of the nominal group are m (modifier), h (head), q (qualifier), and em (emphasizer). These elements are expounded by different primary classes of words. h is obligatory; it is present in every nominal group; m q and em are optional; they may or may not be present. m and q are defined by position relative to h; m precedes h and q follows it. The distribution of em presents some problems.

5.12 Composite formula of the primary structure:

The accepted word order of the nominal group of Assamese is a conflation of progressive and regressive word order. The word order is progressive if the attributive adjective follows the head which is a noun or a noun equivalent. The word order is regressive if the attributive precedes the head. Since m precedes h and h precedes q,

we get a combination of both.

The purpose of grammatical analysis is to make abstractions based on similar but different combinations. Different combinations of primary elements give different primary structures. We may have the following primary structures of the nominal group:

<u>Primary structures</u>	<u>Exponents</u>	<u>Exemplifications</u>
<u>h</u>	head	<u>manuh</u> more h man dies
<u>m h</u>	prehead + head	<u>boga phul</u> m h white flowers.
<u>h q</u>	head + posthead	<u>rame nize</u> h q Ram himself
<u>m h q</u>	prehead + head + posthead	<u>porisromi kakati danoria</u> m h q industrious Kakati honourable Industrious Mr. Kakati.
<u>m h q em</u>	prehead + head + posthead + emphasizer	<u>hokot manuhzon nizehe</u> m h q em fat man himself The only fat man himself.

We can generalize the nominal group formulaically:

(m ..... n)	h	(q)	(em)
prehead	head	posthead	emphasizer
prenoun	noun		postnoun particle
	substantive		

This chain-exhaustive formulation gives us the total accountability of the sequence of the nominal group at the primary delicacy. At the secondary delicacy, however, each chain class can be split up into a set of choice classes except em which is expounded by some unexpandable particles in both levels.

The brackets indicate that an element may or may not be present. The braces show the sequence. em is outside the braces, which means em is not sequence bound.  $m^{.....n}$  means that theoretically we can have any number of modifiers.

### 5.13 The classifiers:<sup>1</sup>

The classifiers provide us with some interesting problems when we try to make a composite formula of the nominal group. The classifiers constitute an important syntactic word-class. They show some important phases of the syntax of the Assamese nominal group. The classifiers mark objects of which they become the adjuncts for various characteristics: male or female, respectful or general, big or small, round or flat or oblong in bundles, etc. European languages have no close equivalence of these classifiers, but the following English expressions are parallel to the classifiers in Assamese:

two sticks of wood  
a piece of paper  
a bunch of grapes  
a glass of milk  
four times  
five head of cattle

---

1) The classifiers in Assamese are very similar in function to those found in many languages in Southeast Asia. Burmese and Thai, for instance, have similar classifiers, which have been described by Professor Mary R. Haas. Mary R. Haas, "The use of numeral classifiers in Burmese", Language, Vol.18, No.3 pp 201-205., Semantic Philology, Vol.XI, 1951, Univ. of Calif.

### 5.131 The classifiers: their forms and functions:

There are some seventy classifiers to be found in Assamese. They constitute a closed class and hence are grammatical in function. They are monosyllabic and function mainly by agglutination, the common denominator among classifiers is that they are bound morphemes and can never be a determinatum.<sup>2</sup> In compounding a numeral with a noun, the Assamese never use the simple number only. The numerals are joined to the nouns with classifiers.

Let us examine the following nominal group:

three men	<u>tini</u> <u>zon</u> <u>manuh</u> three c m	<u>manuh</u> <u>tini</u> <u>zon</u> h o c
four pencils	<u>sari</u> <u>dal</u> <u>kolom</u> four c pencils	<u>kolom</u> <u>sari</u> <u>dal</u> h o c
five books	<u>pas</u> <u>khon</u> <u>kitap</u> five c books	<u>kitap</u> <u>pas</u> <u>khon</u> h o c
six tigers	<u>soj</u> <u>ta</u> <u>bagh</u> six c tiger	<u>bagh</u> <u>soj</u> <u>ta</u> h o c

A classifier indicates an attribute of an object which assigns it to a class. Each classifier can be applied to several objects with the same attribute. We cannot make rules covering the choice of classifiers to be used in every given instance. The use of the classifiers is a matter that must be treated not only as a part of the

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2) The classifiers can neither be determinate nor determinants. Because they are not content words, they cannot be the grammatically dominant part of a compound in English as in Assamese. A determinatum is placed last in a compound (as bow in rainbow). A determinant is placed first in a compound (as rain in rainbow). A classifier is never a component of a compound word.

grammar of the language but also as a part of its lexicography. We almost need a dictionary which provides each noun entry with a parenthetical indication of the classifier required. Classifiers are commonly used with nouns referring to human beings; the choice of the classifier to be used depends largely upon the rank or station in life of the individual to which the noun refers.

manuh goraki	respectable status
manuh zon	ordinary status
manuh to	ordinary status
manuh dal	inferior status

### 5.132 Scope and variety of the classifiers:

The following are a few important classifiers in Assamese.

zon signifies male persons, zoni female both human and animal, to<sup>3</sup>(with two variants ta and ti) is a very common classifier used after nominals. It may be called the definite article of Assamese like the English the. It is used for things of round or oblong sizes and animals as well as man. Two other classifiers are pat and khon. These are used for thin and flat things respectively. dal is also usually for round things. sota is used for thin and flat things. Khila is used for leaf-like things. Zopa is the classifier for trees or the like. Kosa, mutha and

---

3) to is the most common classifier in Assamese. However it takes a morphophonemic change when it is added to a numeral. Take the following examples:

noun + to = lora to - the boy  
 numeral + to + noun = tini ta lora - three boys

As far as is known we do not find this kind of vowel change in any other Assamese classifiers.

tar are used for things in bunches.

Suffixed to a noun, a classifier has the force of a definite article.

manuh zon	the man
lora to	the boy
gos zopa	the tree

Added to a numeral adjective (ordinative see below) they give it a nominal force.

bhal khini mok dia  
 good c me give  
 Give me the good bit

Suffixed to a numeral the classifier expresses the hour of the day.

barōta      bazise  
 twelve + c rings  
 It's twelve o' clock

When khon to dal pat and some other classifiers are suffixed to nouns, the whole is declined as a compound singular noun.

Classifiers with gerund function as substantives:

hoato hol  
 happening-the happened  
 What happened happened

koato bea hoisil  
 speaking-the bad became  
 The speaking was bad.

The classifiers may be preceded by third-person, interrogative, relative or demonstrative pronouns (for example, see below).

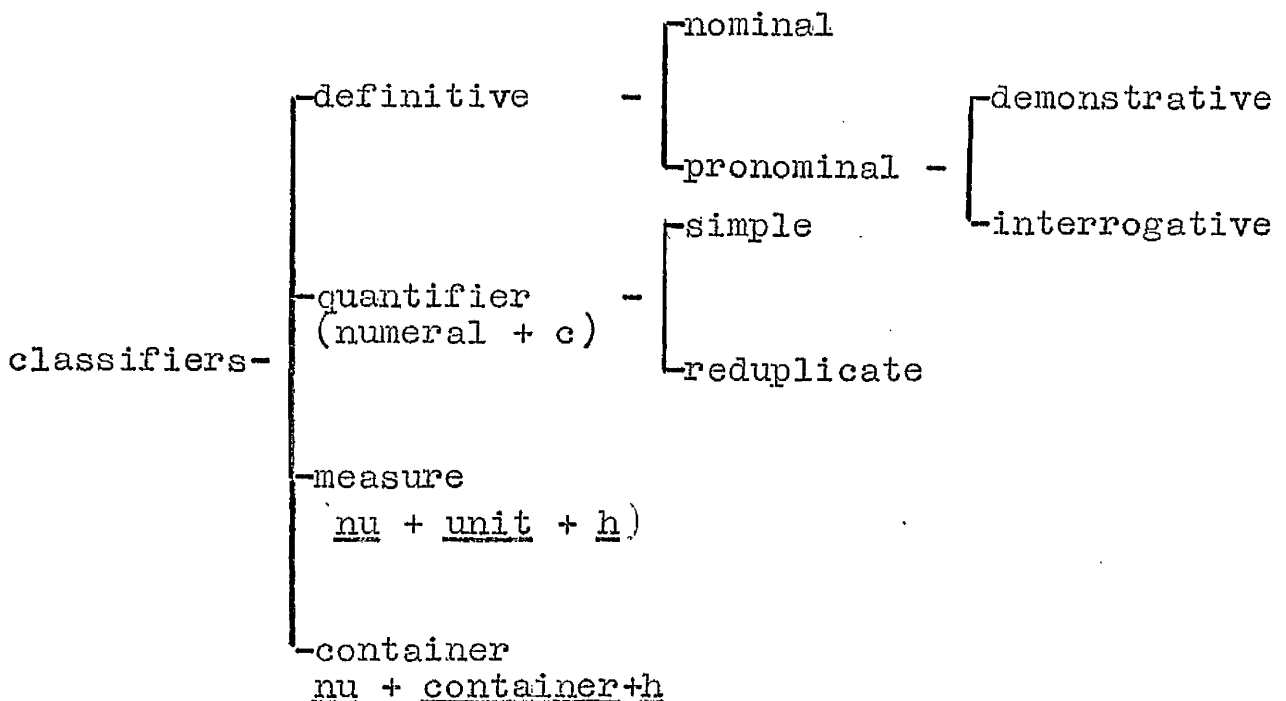
#### 5.133 The classifiers and the plural suffixes:

The classifiers and the plural suffixes are mutually exclusive, that is to say, we cannot have a classifier and a plural suffix in the same construction of the nominal group. The plural suffixes are: bor, bilak hot.

kitab khon	the book
kitab bilak	the book
*kitab khon bilak	
*kitab bilak khon	

#### 5.134 Subdivision of classifiers:

The classifiers are divided into the following subdivisions on the basis of their functions:





5.1341 Definitive classifiers:

These classifiers denote particularization. They express exactly the same meaning as the English definite article the.

Structure is:

h + c (never \*c+h)

monoh dokhor

h c

the piece of meat

hap dal

h c

the snake

gos zopa

h c

the tree

The choice of classifier depends on the size, shape or function of the object. Both demonstrative pronominals as well as interrogative pronominals take appropriate classifiers:

hou khon kitap

that c book

kitab khon

the book

masto

the fish

eito mas

this c fish

kondal kolom  
 which c pen  
 The pen which...

konzon manuh  
 which c man  
 The man who

### 5.1342 Quantifiers:

Semantically a quantifier gives the actual number or some other indication of quantity. A definitive classifier indicates an attribute which assigns the noun to a class. A quantifier, on the other hand, indicates the amount of the specific object. The quantifier is associated with numeral adjectives. The structure of a quantifier is:

noun + numeral + classifier  
 numeral + classifier + noun

sithi + tinikhon  
 letter three c  
tini + khon + sithi  
 three c letter

There is concord between the noun and the classifier. Take the following examples:

Sithi + tini + khon (three letters)  
 tini + khon + sithi  
 quantifier head

pas + zopa gos  
 m c h  
 quantifier



The quantifier can be reduplicated in order to give a distributive sense:

Simple : ɛpat khapor  
qn h  
a javelin

reduplicated: ɛpat ɛpat khapor  
qn qn n  
a javelin (for each man)

### 5.1343 Measures:

Semantically a measure<sup>5</sup> concerns itself with the quantification of things by some sort of measure: size, extension, weight, amount, time, money, etc. The measures differ from some of the classifiers listed above in that they take an antecedent noun. As we have seen above, no numeral is capable of being compounded with a noun unless it is followed by a classifier.

pas ta ghora (but not \* pas ghora)  
nu c h  
five c horse  
Five horses.

The structure of measures is: numeral + measure unit + head. The measure units are members of a particular group of nouns. Since the measure units do not take class-

---

5) It is possible to classify systematically all the objects that can be measured, and work out a system with a set of options, (i.e. measures of capacity, measures of space, measures of time, and so forth). There are Assamese measures of time of native origin, but nowadays these terms are being discarded in favour of Western measures. However, in the rural areas people still use the old time measures of Assamese origin.

ifiers, and since they do take noun suffixes, it is simpler to regard them as nominal constituents of measures.

Semantically the measures cover an area such as is covered in English by words like 'bunch', 'pair', 'Basket', etc.

hat      tola      hona  
nu      measure      h

seven tola gold  
Seven tolas of gold

du      bigha      mati  
nu      measure      h

two bigha land  
Two bighas of land

tini      mail      bat  
nu      measure      h

three mile road  
A distance of three miles.

doh      mon      gur  
nu      measure      h

ten maund molasses  
Ten maunds of molasses.

#### 5.1344 Containers:

A good many classifiers designate the quantity of objects to be enumerated, and, frequently, the amount held in some container. Some of the particles used are related to containers, such as pasim(basket), kahi (dish), bati (cup), etc. The structure is: numeral + container + noun (head).

hat pasi hakpasoli  
nu      con      h

seven baskets vegetable  
Seven baskets of vegetables



need not be upgraded to a primary element. c is, after all, a bound morpheme which cannot stand by itself. This leads to another complicated question. Should we consider h + c one element or two different elements? We feel that it is better to consider them as one, since it is impossible to devise rules which will serve as an infallible guide in choosing the proper classifier to be employed with any given noun. It is just as in French and German, where one must know the gender of each noun. We may say that a noun is suffixed by a classifier, the whole of which is declined as a compound singular noun. This compound singular noun (h + c in endocentric relation) takes the full battery of noun suffixes. For example:

manuh to      The man  
           h        c

manuh to e he      The man himself (with subject marker)  
           h        c    sm em

Here h + c constitutes the base which is followed by other affixes.

#### 5.135 The co-occurrence of the classifiers with the elements of the nominal group

We can have the following sets of co-occurrants:

m c but not \*c m,

h c but not \*c m

m c can be split up into the following subdivisions of the plane of secondary delicacy:

<u>m</u> <u>c</u>	{	deictics	( <u>d</u> )	+	( <u>c</u> )
		ordinatives	( <u>o</u> )	+	( <u>c</u> )
		epithets	( <u>e</u> )	+	( <u>c</u> )
		nominals	( <u>n</u> )	+	( <u>c</u> )

The compounding of the ordinatives with the classifiers is obligatory, although ordinals may not take classifiers. We have discussed these below.

5.1351 Examples of co-occurents:

houto ki  
 d + c: what  
 that + what  
 What is that?

paszon ahise  
 o + c: has come  
 five + c has come  
 Five people have come.

beato mok dia  
 e + c: me give  
 bad + c me give  
 Give me the bad one

ingazon gol  
 n + c: went  
 English + c want  
 The Englishman went away

In the above examples, d + c, o + c, e + c, and n + c are all used substantively, having the nominal force to be able to fill in the h in the nominal group.

5.1352 Co-occurrence of restrictions:

The classifiers cannot co-occur either with q or with em. The following structures are therefore unacceptable:

- \* q c
- \* c q
- \* em c
- \* c em



But we can have the following:

manuh zone he  
h + c em

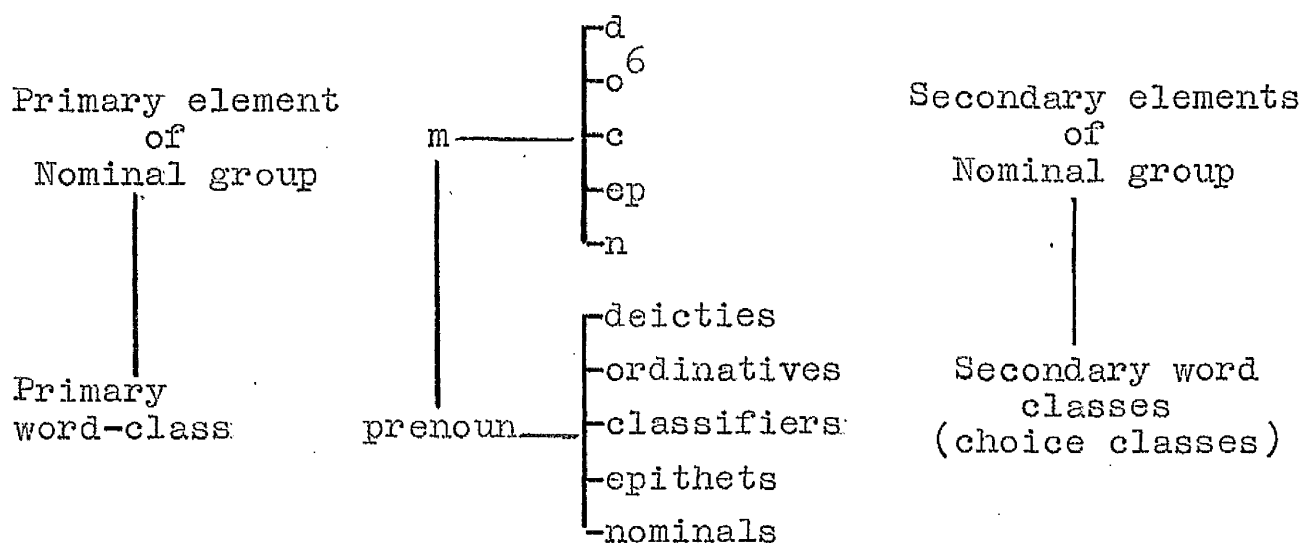
The man only

manuh zone nize he  
h + c q em

Only the man himself

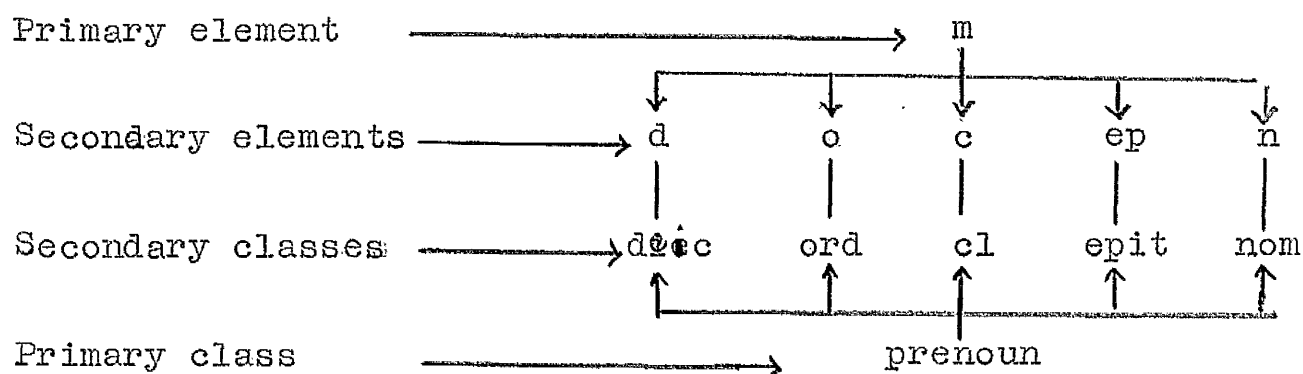
#### 5.14 Modification:

Each word before the headword is a modifier. With an increase in delicacy, the primary class (modifier) is broken into secondary classes of the same rank. These secondary classes may be chain classes or choice classes. If there is only one pre-head place, we may have a choice from among a number of secondary classes of modifiers. If there are more than one pre-head places, we may have the co-occurrence of a number of secondary classes of modifiers. These two cases may be represented separately:



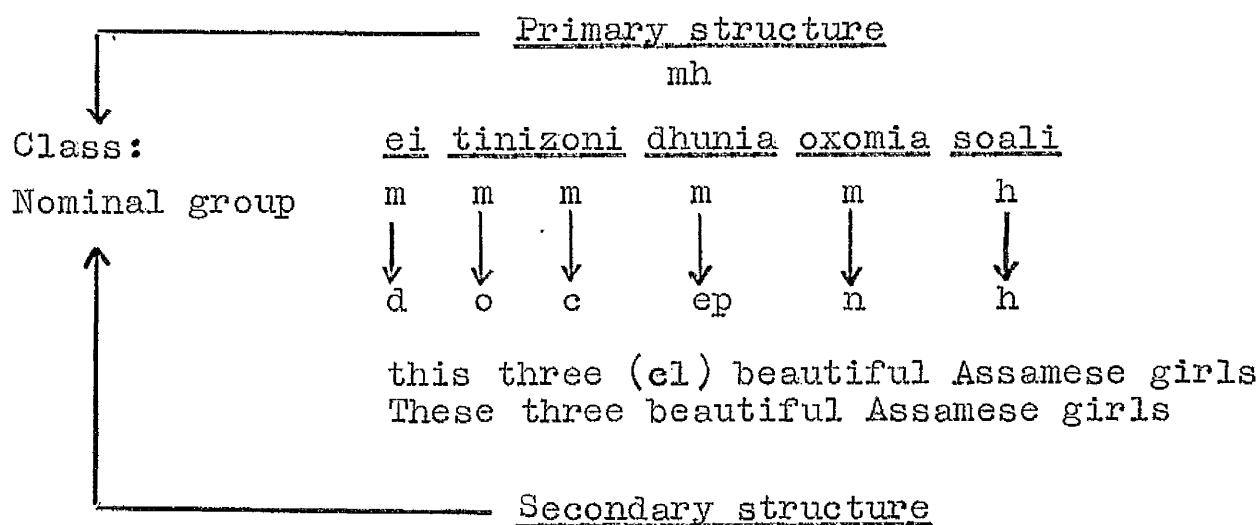
6) There is some overlap in the co-occurrence of o and c, in that ordinatives cannot occur without classifiers. As we have mentioned above, the compounding...(cont'd next page)

Diagrammatically we can have the following configuration when we need to show the correlation of chain-classes of the secondary word classes on the syntagmatic axis:



#### 5.142 Primary structure and secondary structure:

Now we may show, by an increase in delicacy, the elements of primary structure breaking down into secondary elements which form secondary structures:



(cont'd from previous page) ...of the ordinatives with the classifiers is obligatory. o splits into cardinals and ordinals. The structure of the cardinal is: o + c, and the structure of the ordinal is: o = c. c is obligatory in the former, and optional in the latter.

Normally, deictics, ordinatives, classifiers, epithets and nominals are in this order of sequence:

d o c ep n h.

<u>ei</u>	<u>tini</u>	<u>zoni</u>	<u>dhunia</u>	<u>oxomia</u>	<u>soali</u>
d	o	c	e	n	h
└──────────────────┘					
m					

The sequence represents a regressive syntax:

<u>ei</u>	<u>tini</u>	<u>zoni</u>	<u>dhunia</u>	<u>oxomia</u>	<u>soali</u>
					h
└──────────┘				└──┘	
	└──┘		└──┘	└──┘	
		└──┘	└──┘	└──┘	
			└──┘	└──┘	
				└──┘	
					└──┘

## 5.2 Deictics:

Deictic is that secondary class of word which expounds the secondary element d in the structure of the nominal group. Normally, deictics precede ordinatives and ordinatives precede classifiers. As we have mentioned above (section 5.1351), deictics may co-occur with classifiers. These are usually pronominal deictics. If possessive deictics are combined with classifiers, they can act as heads of nominal groups. In the case of the numeral ek 'one', the classifier is repeated twice, once with the deictic and a second time with the numeral ek. Let us take the following examples:

hou dukhon soki  
       d   o+c       h

these two+c chair  
 Those two ~~are~~ chairs

But we have this structure with ek:

hou khon ekhon soki  
       d+c       o+c       h

that + c one +c chair  
 That is a chair.

But not:

\*hou khon dukhon soki or \*hou ekhon soki.

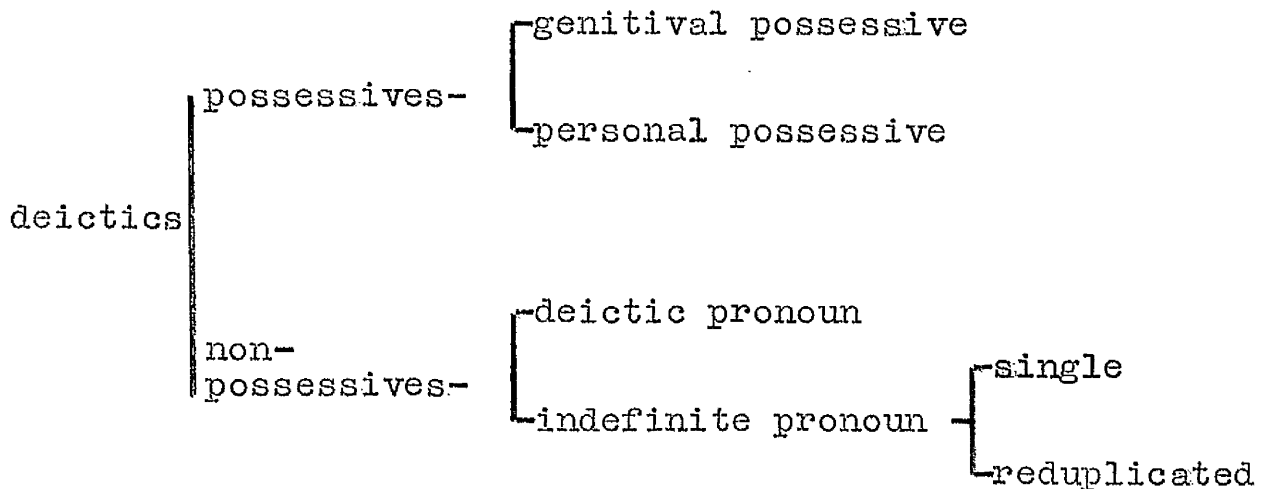
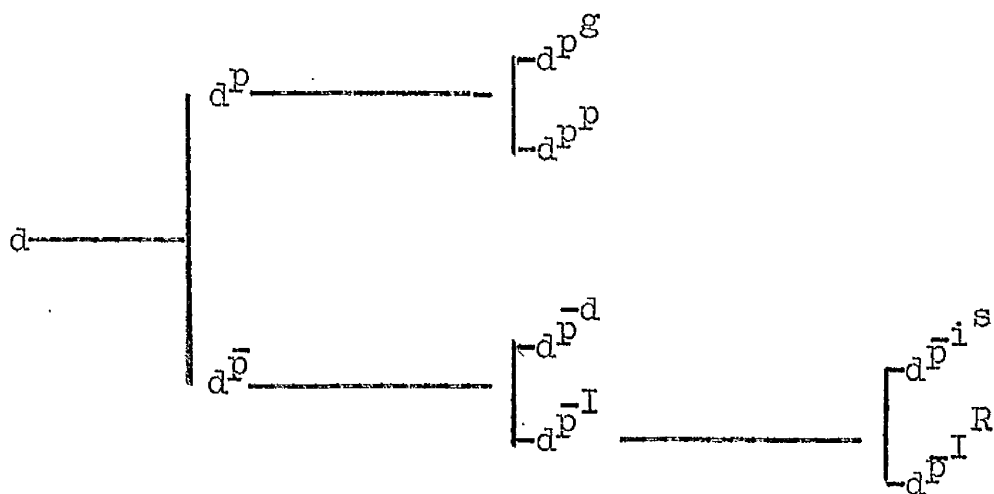
When a deictic is compounded with a classifier, it functions as the head of the group:

mor hkun bhal  
       d+c       good

mine is good (referring to a table)

## 5.21 Subdivisions of deictics :

Deictics may, more delicately, be broken into further secondary classes:



The distinction between the possessives and the non-possessives is as follows:

The former are always suffixed by -r (in personal possessives as well as genitival possessives) whereas the latter are expounded by indeclinable words such as olop kisuman (= some, a few), or okonman (= a little).

5.22 The genitival possessives:

The genitival possessives and the personal possessives belong to two different classes.

First, the exponents of  $\underline{d}^{pg}$  are different from the exponents of  $\underline{d}^{pp}$  in that  $\underline{d}^{pg}$ 's are expounded by noun + possessive suffix r (such as ramor (of Ram), kitapor (of books) ), whereas  $\underline{d}^{pp}$ 's are expounded by pronominal possessives such as:

mor	(my)
amar	(our)
tomar	(your)

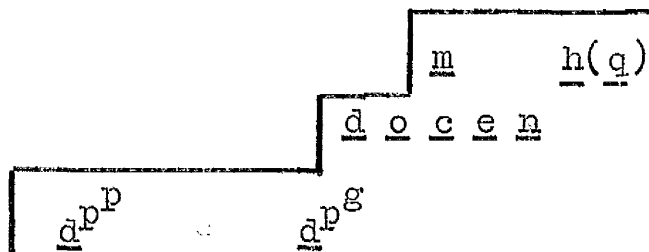
Secondly, 'genitival' and 'personal' are mutually exclusive terms in the system of possessives. This means that  $\underline{d}^{pp}$  and  $\underline{d}^{pg}$  cannot co-occur in one and the same place in a nominal group. For example:

<u>mor</u>	<u>lora</u>
$\underline{d}^{pp}$	<u>h</u>
my	son

<u>kexobor</u>	<u>lora</u>
$\underline{d}^{pg}$	<u>h</u>
Keshab's	son

<u>kokairlora</u>	
$\underline{d}^{pg}$	<u>h</u>
(my) elder brother's	son

But if we have one more prehead place for one more member of the secondary classes of modifiers, we can have a sequence like this:



For example:

mor kokair bia

d p p      d p g      h

my elder brother's marriage

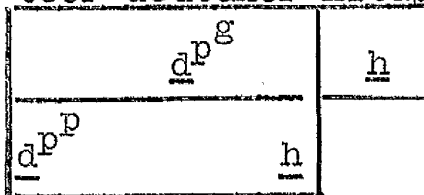
teor deutakor kitab

d p p      d p g      h

his father's book

Thirdly, a genitival possessive is always either a rankshifted nominal group or a rankshifted clause. Genitival possessives are nominal groups or clauses operating within other nominal groups.

teor deutakor kitab



his father's book

This is an example of the rankshifted nominal group. The structure of the whole group is  $\underline{d}p^g$ , but the exponent of  $\underline{d}p^g$  is also a nominal group (structure  $\underline{d}p^p$ . h.). We may therefore say that here we have a rankshifted nominal group operating at  $\underline{d}p^g$  :

	eidore kitap porhar obhjax			
group structure	$\underline{d}p^g$			h
clause structure	A	O	P	
	this way book of reading habit			
	The habit of reading like this			

This is an example of a rankshifted clause operating in word structure. We may say that the structure of our word class, genitival possessive, is made up of a free morpheme plus a bound morpheme. The exponent of the bound morpheme is r, but in place of a free morpheme we have a rankshifted clause (structure: AOP).

#### 5.221 Complex genitival possessives:

We may get a complex of genitival possessives one inside the other showing layers of rankshift or rankshift in depth. Take the following nominal group:

Hari's elder brother's friends girl's of marriage date  
horir kokajekokor bondhur soalir biar tarikhor

			$\underline{d}p^g$	h	h
			$\underline{d}p^g$	h	
$\underline{d}p^g$		h			
$\underline{d}p^g$	h				

The date of the marriage of Hari's brother's friends



The characteristic feature of this structure is the predominance of the noun; it is repeated in depth. Here we have only two elements: head and genitival possessive. They have been repeated in depth, that is, we find five layers of  $d^{pg}$  structure. To quote Halliday:

Language also exhibits a different kind of structure, the recursive structure. Here as the name implies, and element of structure, or a combination of elements, is repeated in depth, a series of such elements thus forming a progression.<sup>7</sup>

### 5.23 The personal possessives:

The personal possessive pronouns may be shown in the form of the following matrix:

	singular	plural
1st person	mor 'my'	amar amalokor 'our'
2nd person	grade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>honorific-aponar</li> <li>equal-tomar</li> <li>inferior-tor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aponalokor</li> <li>tomalokor</li> <li>tohotor</li> </ul> 'your'
3rd person	grade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-təkhətor</li> <li>-təor</li> <li>-tar-gender               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tar</li> <li>tair</li> <li>eitor</li> <li>heitor</li> <li>houtor</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>təkhəthokolor</li> <li>-təolokor</li> <li>-hihotor               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hihotor (masc.)</li> <li>hihotor (fem.)</li> <li>eibilakor</li> <li>heibilakoa</li> <li>houbilokor</li> </ul> </li> </ul> (neut.)
	his/her/its	'their'

7) M.A.K. Halliday: 'Class in relation to the axes of chain and choice in the language'. Linguistics No.2, Dec.1963, p.11

The personal possessives have three linguistic features. First, they are, like all possessives, overtly marked by -r, which is a bound morpheme. Secondly, they function as attributive adjectives and hence signal that the head of the nominal group is coming soon. In other words, they are satellites, but never the nucleus, of the nominal group. Thirdly, unlike the genitivals, the personal possessives can occur only once in a nominal group. The genitivals are the mortar in a brick wall, as it were, not forming the substance of the wall yet holding it together. We can use a series of genitivals which cement the relationship between the constituents of the nominal group.

#### 5.24 Deictic pronouns:

Deictic pronouns and indefinite pronouns are subdivisions of the non-possessives. They are different in a number of ways. First, the exponents of  $\underline{d}\bar{p}^d$  are different from the exponents of  $\underline{d}\bar{p}^I$ ; secondly, they are mutually exclusive terms in the system of the non-possessives. Thirdly, indefinite pronouns are indeclinable - they do not inflect for number, gender or person. They do not enter into any concordial relation with h. Deictic pronouns, on the other hand, do participate in number concord with h:

The deictic pronouns: eito, heito (this, that)  
eibilak, heibilak (these, those)  
eia heia (this, that)

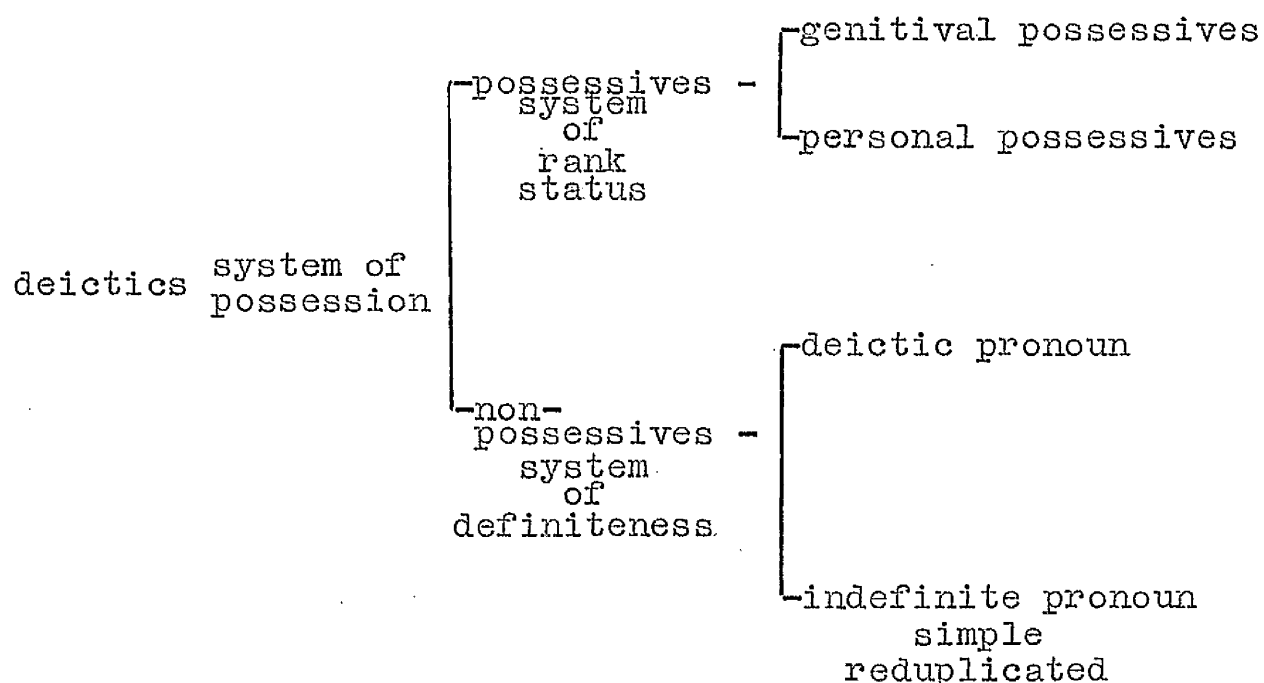
Indefinite pronouns: [ simple  
] reduplicated

Simple:     olop (a little),                   keitaman (a few)  
               okon ( little )

Reduplicated:   olop olop (a little)  
                   kisu kisu (just a little)  
                   okon okon (little ones)

## 5.25 Systems of possessives at d :

At d we see primarily the system of possession which has two terms: possessives and non-possessives. Within the possessives, we have a choice between genitival and personal possessives. We may call this the system of rank status, because one of the terms (i.e., the genitival possessive) is marked by rankshift. Within the non-possessives we have a choice between deictic pronouns and indefinite pronouns. We may call this the system of definiteness. It is marked by the presence or absence of inflection.



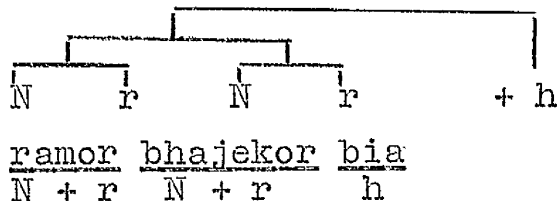
5.251 The rank status of r :

A word must be added here about the genitival postpositional suffix r

Do the genitivals show word inflection or group inflection? One may say:

mor lorar bia  
 my son's marriage  
 my son's marriage

In a similar way we can have a number of -r's signalling the relationship between one noun and another. Thus a complex situation may arise which we would like to handle appropriately. Does the genitival postposition r belong to the word lorar (son's) or to the nominal group mor lorar (my son's)? If we say that it applies to the word lorar, we cannot explain the relation of modification between the nominal groups on either side of the genitival postposition. It is true that the genitival postposition is a bound morpheme and that it enters into the structure of a word, but the fact remains that in such cases we invariably have either a nominal group or a dependent clause rankshifted to that position (h). So we may say that the genitival postposition refers to the whole group or clause operating at h. The picture is something like this:



Ram's brother's marriage

The genitival possessives in Assamese are more or less like the English genitives.<sup>8</sup> The following extract from C.E. Bazell's Syntactic Relation and Linguistic Typology could be said to be true of Assamese genitival possessives as well:

This is the group inflection, of which the standard example is the English Genitive (For example, the king of France's daughter). Here the position of the inflexion is not fixed in relation to a word class, but in relation to a group. The English genitival suffix is always final in the group.<sup>9</sup>

#### 5.252 Co-occurrence of different secondary classes of deictic

Normally the secondary classes of the deictic co-occur in the following order:

$d^p g$ precedes $d^p d$	horir eikhon kitap Hari's this book This book of Hari's
$d^p g$ precedes $d^p I$	horir zikono kitap Hari's any book Any book of Hari's
$d^p p$ precedes $d^p d$	tomar eikhon kitap yours this book This book of yours
$d^p p$ precedes $d^p I$	tomar zikono kitap yours any book Any book of yours

8) Halliday has exhaustively discussed the status of 's in the phrase the king of England's hat. In Assamese we have the same problem with -r. The casual suffix -r functions at the word rank as word level. Halliday, 'The concept of rank: A reply', JOURNAL OF LINGUISTICS, 2.1., p. 117

9) Linguistic Typology: C.E. Bazell's Inaugural Lecture, SOAS, University of London, 1958.

### 5.3 The ordinatives:

The ordinative is that secondary class of m(odifier) which expounds the secondary element o in the structure of the nominal group. One way of differentiating ordinatives from deictics is that we can put an emphatic particle (such as he, kebol, matro) or emphasizer between the deictic and the ordinative.

mor tinizon bhai  
my three brothers

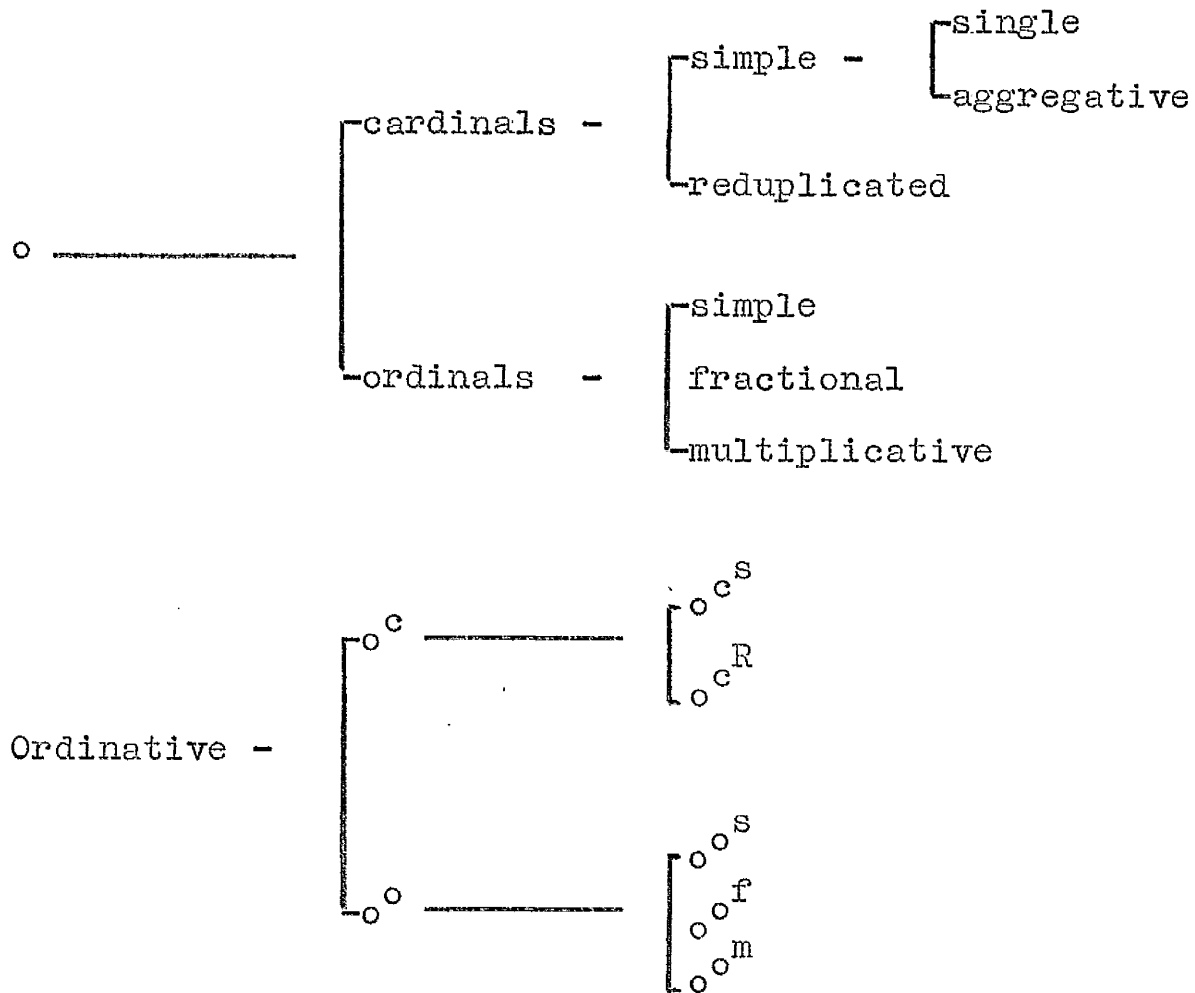
mor tinizonhe bhai  
d o em h

The only three brothers (that I have).

The most remarkable feature of the ordinatives is that they are always combined with classifiers. No ordinatives except perhaps the ordinals can stand without the help of the classifiers. The ordinatives and quantifiers (which we have discussed above) are similar but not identical in that ordinals may not be suffixed by classifiers.

#### 5.31 Further secondary classes of ordinatives :

Ordinatives may be subdivided more delicately into secondary classes:



When there is only one occurrence of o, we have a choice between the cardinals and the ordinals; when we have more than one occurrence of o, we may have cardinals and ordinals in chain relation. Their order will be:

$$o^o + o^c \quad 10$$

prothom lorato

$$O^O \quad h$$

the first boy

prothom duzon lora

$$o^o \quad . \quad o^c + c \quad h$$

The first two boys

10) This o (a secondary element in the structure of the nominal group) must not be confused with O (object), a primary element of the clause structure.

The cardinals are that secondary class of ordinatives which do not enter into any gender-number concord. Neither do they take any casual suffixes. The cardinals are affixed with classifiers (including definitives, measures and containers). Some morphophonemic changes can be noticed when cardinals are combined with classifiers. These morphophonemic changes can be overlooked. The cardinals are of three types:

a) Simple:

ek	'one'	ek toka	'one Rupee)	ēta lōra	'one boy'
dui	'two'	du zon manuh			'two men'
tini	'three'	tini zoni soali			'three girls'
sari	'four'	sari khon kitap			'four books'

b) Aggregatives:

Semantically aggregatives convey the meaning of collectiveness; syntactically an enclitic o is added to the aggregatives:

dujo	dujozon manuh gol	'both the men have gone'
tinio	tinio zon soali ahise	'all three girls came'
sario	hi <u>sario ta am</u> khale	'he's eaten all four mangoes'
	o+c+h	

c) Reduplicated or reiterated type:

When the cardinals are reduplicated, they are reduplicated completely. Reduplication has the semantic meaning of intensity as well as plurality:



paszon paszon<sup>11</sup> manuh zaok  
 five five men let go  
 Let the men go in fives

dukhon dukhon koi kitap anibo pari  
 two two book to bring can  
 Two books can be borrowed at a time

5.32 Some more examples of cardinals

du dal kolom  
 o c h

two pencils

tinizon manuh  
 o c h

three men

eta hati  
 o+h h

one elephant

sari kap sah  
 o con h

four cups of tea

pas goz kapor  
 h

five yards of cloth

tini ho manuh  
 o nu h

three hundred people

(nu stands for numeral units)

tini mon saul  
 o m h

three maunds of rice

pas her ghi  
 o m h

five sears of ghee (clarified butter)

---

11) Reduplication is an important morphophonemic process used fairly extensively in Assamese. In addition to adjectives, reduplication is employed with adverbs, verbs and nouns.

5.33 Ordinals:

The ordinals are that secondary class of the ordinatives which may or may not be affixed by classifiers. We can have the following structures with ordinals:

- I.         $o^o + h + c$     prothom lora zon  
     $o^o$             h            c  
    the first boy
- II.         $o^o + c + h$     prothom zon lora  
     $o^o$             c            h  
    the first boy
- III.         $h + o^o + c$     lora prothom zon  
    h             $o^o$             c  
    the first boy

In general ordinatives have no number-gender concord. However, in an elevated register some gender concord can be observed.

prothom lora zon  
 the first boy

prothom bibhokti  
 the first case-ending

The ordinals are of three different types:

a) Simple

prothom    first  
 ditija     second  
 tritijo    third  
 soturtho   fourth

---

(cont'd from previous page) When adverbs and verbs are reduplicated, they express continuous action. When nouns are reduplicated they give the sense of plurality. Adjectives can be reduplicated for the purpose of emphasis and intensity.

Unlike the cardinals, we cannot reduplicate the simple ordinals:

\*prothom prothom lora

b) Fractional type

adha	half
tinibhagor ebhag	one third
saribhagor ebhag	one fourth

In the elevated register we use Sanskritic forms:

ek tritiaonxo	one third
ek soturanxo	one fourth

c) Multiplicative type

dugun	double
tinigun	three times, three-fold

In usual sequence  $o^o$  precedes  $o^c$ . A change of sequence changes the meaning. Take the following examples:

prothom duzon lorai kamto korise  
 $\frac{o^o \quad o^c+c \quad h \quad o \quad P}{S}$

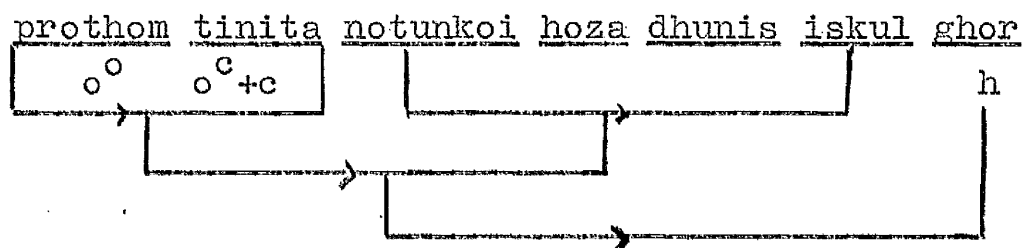
The first two boys did the work

teo duzon prothom lorak bota dise  
 $\frac{o^c+c \quad o^o \quad h \quad o \quad P}{S \quad O}$

the first two boys prize has give  
 He has given prizes to the first two boys

When there is only one occurrence of o we have a choice between the cardinals and the ordinals. We can set up a system of concord to account for this choice. The cardinals do not participate in the concordial relation with h, but the ordinals do in the elevated register of Sanskritized Assamese.

One of the distinguishing features of the ordinatives is that they modify all the elements that follow them in a regressive word order, that is to say, syntactically, the modifiers precede the head:



first three newly built beautiful school house  
The first three newly built beautiful school buildings.

In the above diagram the arrows point from modifiers to head.

#### 5.34 The Ordinatives and the Quantifiers:

We have discussed above (section 5.3) the difference between the ordinatives and the quantifiers. Some confusion may arise because one overlaps the other. Yet one may say that the ordinatives can replace the quantifiers, but not the other way round. Classifiers as well as numerals play an important part in both groups. Both can be reduplicated. The ordinals which constitute one of the secondary classes of the ordinatives differ from the quantifiers. The ordinals may not be affixed by classifiers. Ordinatives is a cover term for both cardinals and ordinals. Both cardinals and quantifiers are interchangeable. Another important difference between ordinals on the one hand and cardinals and quantifiers on the other is that the former, when affixed by classifiers,

can function anaphorically as the head of the nominal group; the latter cannot. Take the following examples:

prothom zoni soali budhiok  
o c h

first +c girl intelligent  
The first girl is intelligent

Anaphorically:

prothomzoni budhiok  
o+c

the first one is clever

#### 5.4 Epithets:

Epithet is that secondary class of modifier which expounds the secondary element e in the structure of the nominal group. One of the main distinctions between deictics and ordinatives on the one hand and epithets and nominals on the other is that the latter classes allow class-recurrence. Theoretically any number of insertions may be made in the positions e and n. The exponents of deictics are closed-system items but exponents of epithets are open-set.

ezon bhodro nomro okho dhunia oxomia bamun sonoskritor pondit  
o e e e e n n n h

one cultured modest tall handsome Assamese Brahmin of Sanskrit scholar

A tall, decent, cultured, handsome Assamese Brahmin Sanskrit scholar.

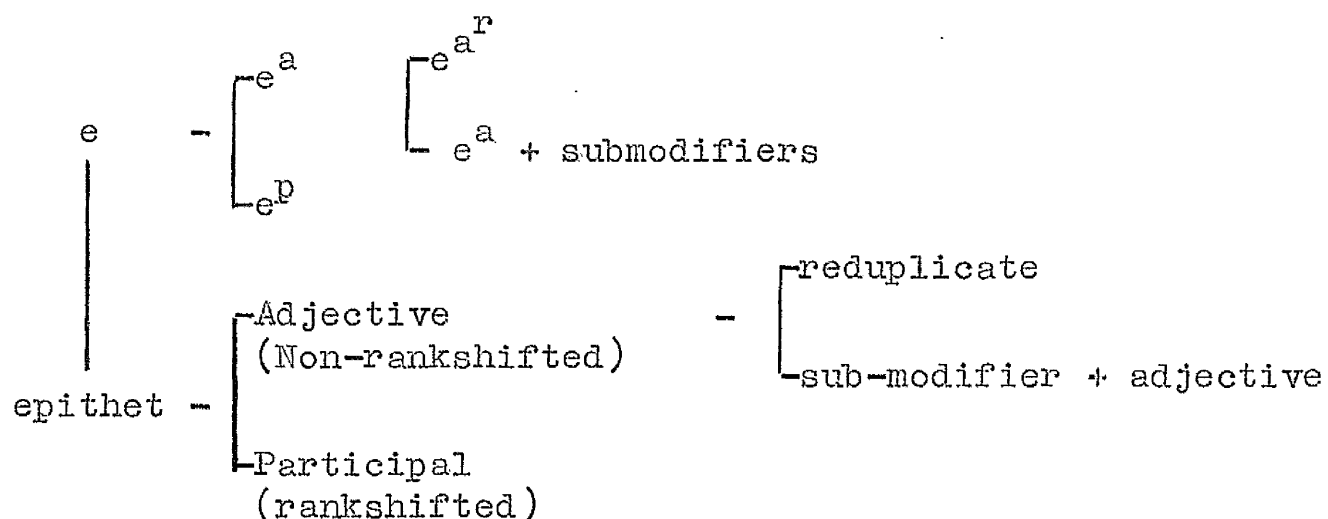
ezon bor okonmani xoru lora  
o e e e h

one very tiny little boy

A very tiny little boy

5.41 The secondary classes of epithets:

With an increase in delicacy, epithets break down into further secondary classes:

5.42 The adjective:

The adjective is a subdivision of e(pithet). It has the following defining characteristics:

- a) It is not rankshifted.
- b) It does not participate in number-gender concord with the head (except in elevated language).
- c) It may be preceded by submodifiers.

Adjectives may be grouped into the following types:

- I Simple adjectives: e.g. horu small  
dhunia beautiful  
bhal good
- II Bound morphemes such as [a] may be added to the exponents of  $e^a$ .

halodhia yellow  
heuzia green  
kozola grey  
.....

### III Reduplicated or reiterated type:

horu horu lora            little boys  
dhunia dhunia soali    beautiful girls

### IV The submodifiers:

Adjectives may be preceded by submodifiers but there may be different degrees of submodification. As we have noted above, Assamese syntax is regressive, unlike the progressive syntax of English. This may be seen in submodification (s/m)

dhunia soali  
e        h  
beautiful girl

bor dhunia soali  
s/m    e        h  
very beautiful girl

Submodifiers belonging to this class are:

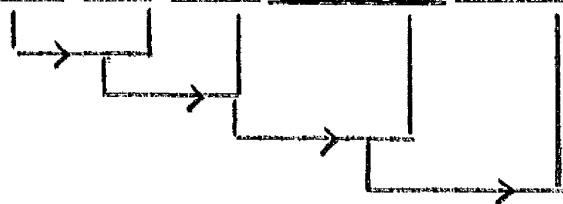
bor  
otibɔ                            very much  
khub  
otjonto  
bhojanok                        terrible

These submodifiers may be preceded by other submodifiers.

enekua otjonto dhurondhor lora

such very wicked boy  
Such a terribly wicked boy

khub oti besi moromial soali



A very very kind hearted girl.

Here khub modifies oti, khub oti modifies besi, khub oti besi modifies moromial and finally, khub oti besi moromial modifies soali. It is interesting to note that each item is a head to all the preceding items and a modifier to the item immediately following it. It may be said that the relation between the prehead elements here is not a simple place ordered relation, rather it is a relation 'in depth'.

Other types of epithet are where we have a number of adjectives either each individually modifying the head or all of them forming what Victor Yngve calls "an accumulative non-coordinated pattern of modification".<sup>12</sup>

#### I Relation of Coordination:

hanto dhunia pakoit soali

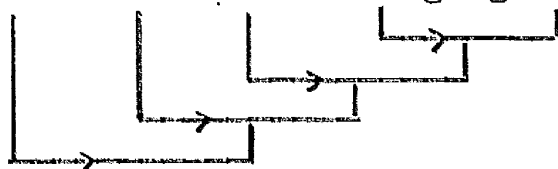
Sober beautiful skilful girl

A sober, beautiful, skilful girl.

We may look upon this as a case of complex e. The items bear the same relation to the head and their positions are interchangeable.

#### II Accumulative non-coordinated pattern of modification:

notunkoi hoza dhunia boga ghor



The newly built beautiful white house

12) Victor H. Yngve 'A model and a hypothesis for language-structure', Amer. Philological Soc., Vol.104, No.5, 1960



There is a relation of subordination between e and h; this relation is complex for it is a relation in depth. Each item is subordinate to all that follows. What Nelson Francis has said about patterns of noun modifiers in American English seems, to a great extent, to be true of the patterns of modification in the nominal group structure in Assamese. To quote Nelson Francis:

"When a structure of modification with a noun as head includes several modifiers of different sorts, the result is often quite a complex affair. But it is organised along quite strict and precise lines. The most important fact about it is that unless it contains structure of coordination it consists not of a series of parallel modifiers like a four horse team pulling a chariot, but a series of structure of modification one within the other, in a manner that has already been compared to Chinese boxes." <sup>13</sup>

#### 5.43 The participials :

The participial is another subdivision of e(pithet). It has the following defining characteristics:

- a) It has a rankshifted clause (dependent) operating at e.
- b) It participates in gender concord with its head.
- c) It may be submodified.

uriphura sorai  
p h

flying the bird  
The flying bird

khai thoka soalizoni  
p p h

eating staying the girl  
The girl who is eating.

---

13) Nelson Francis, The Structure of American English, p.

#### 5.44 Co-occurrence of secondary classes of epithets :

Where we have more than one type of secondary class of e occurring together, the adjectives follow the participals.

uriphura boga sorai  
 $e^p$                        $e^a$                $h$

flying white bird  
 The flying white bird

gan gai thoka dhunia soalizoni  
 $e^p$                                $e^a$                        $h$

song singing staying beautiful the girl  
 The beautiful girl who is singing

In the above examples of rankshifted clauses at e, the descriptive clause comes before the noun (h) described. In English, however, we have the reverse order. The antecedent (h) is followed by the descriptive clause. The antecedent in English thus becomes postcedent in Assamese.

#### 5.5 The prehead nominal (n)

The prehead nominal is the secondary class of modifier which expounds the secondary element n in the structure of the nominal group. The prehead nominals are different from prehead adjectives. We can insert a submodifier (i.e. bor, bohut, khub, ottonto, kebo, etc.) before an adjective, but we cannot do so before a nominal. Let us take the following examples:

bor bhal dex  
 $e^{s/m}$      $e$                $h$

very good country  
 A very beautiful country

bor bhal oxom dex  
 e<sup>s/m</sup> e n h

very good Assam country  
 The very beautiful land of Assam.

We cannot say:

\*bor oxom dex  
 very Assam country

but we can say,

bor bhal sorkar  
 very good government

but not,

\*bor konres sorkar  
 very congress government

Another distinction is that adjectives can be reduplicated or reiterated whereas nominals can not. We can say,

dhunia dhunia soali  
 beautiful beautiful girls

but not,

\*guahati guahati sohor  
 Gauhati city

\*london london sohor  
 London city

All prehead nominals can operate as 'head' in the nominal group at S, O and C and take the postpositive particles such as subject marker e and object marker k, but

not all other epithets can do so. Positionally, epithets always precede nominals. Another important distinction is that an epithet may not co-occur with certain personal possessives whereas a nominal may. For example, we cannot say

\*mor boga 'my why'

but we can say,

mor oxom 'my Assam'

mor uxa (Usha sewing machine, made in India)

But when a classifier is added to an epithet, it gets the nominal force and can co-occur with personal possessives. Semantically e + c occurs in the context-bound environment and is in fact an anaphoric substitute.

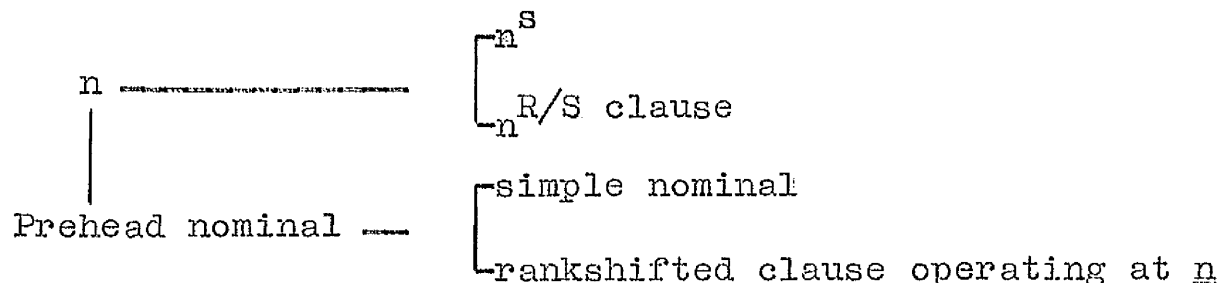
gor rona goruto ahise kinto mor bogato aha nai

his red cow has come but my the white hasn't come

His red cow has come but my white one has not come.

#### 5.51 Secondary classes of prehead nominals :

The prehead nominals break down, more delicately, into two secondary classes, the simple type and the rankshifted clauses operating at n.



5.52 Simple nominals at n :

These simple prehead nominals include names of nations, nationalities, places, countries, trades, races, castes and communities.

hualkusi pat

silk from sualkuchi (a town in Assam)

gauhati biswabidjaloi

Gauhati University

bamun manuh

a man of Brahmin caste

nim saban

'Neem Soap' (Indian brand name)

Some of these prehead nominals (especially the measure unit operating at n) are usually preceded by ordinatives. We have discussed this above in the section classifiers. Following are some more examples:

du goz kapor

o n h

two yards of cloth

hat mon saul

o n h

two mons of rice (1 mon = 40 pounds)

tini piala sah

o n h

three cups of tea

ek gilās pani

o

a glass of water

ek kahi bhat

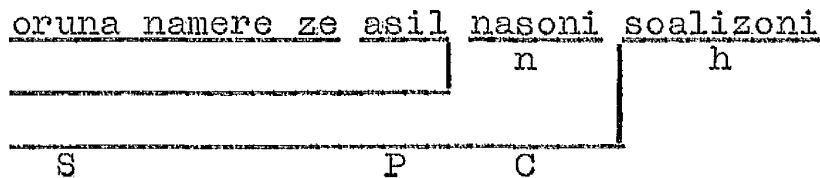
o

a dish of rice

The remarkable feature is that these nominals do not take affixes. They occur just in the base forms.

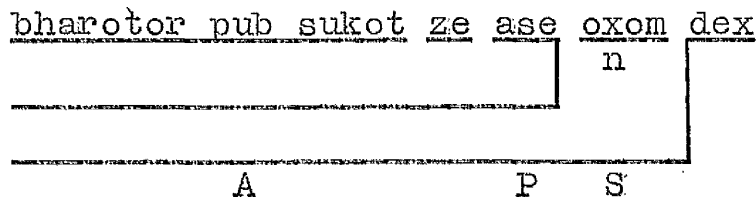
### 5.53 Rankshifted clause operating at n :

The rankshifted clause operating at n has to be analysed backward from the head.



Aruna by name that was dancer the girl  
The dancing girl whose name was Aruna.

Here the rankshifted clause structure at n is CPS.



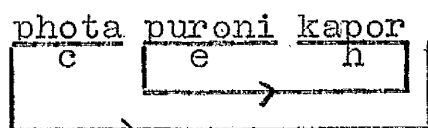
The land of Assam that exists in the eastern corner of India.

Here the rankshifted clause structure at n is APS

### 5.6 Special modification :

There are various kinds of relation within the general pattern of modification.

a) We may have a string of modifiers all ultimately modifying the same head:



wornout old cloth  
A piece of old and worn out cloth

Here kapor is the head; phota and puroni both modify the head. The two e's are coordinate and represent the same depth of modification. Their order may be reversed or they may be joined by a linker. We can say

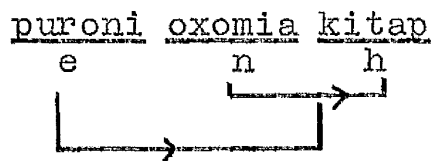
puroni phota kapor

puroni aru phota kapor

old and worn out cloth

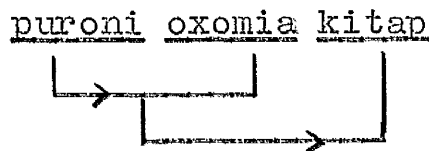
A piece of old and worn out cloth.

b) We may have two layers of modification, one within the other:



Here oxomia is a modifier of kitab and puroni is a modifier of oxomia.

This is rather an ambiguous construction for it could also mean "books on or about old Assamese". In that case the analysis would be:



puroni modifies oxomia and puronia oxomia modifies kitab.

The remarkable feature of (b) is that the order of modifiers cannot be reversed. We cannot say

\*oxomia puroni kitab

Another distinguishing feature is that we cannot put linkers between these modifiers.

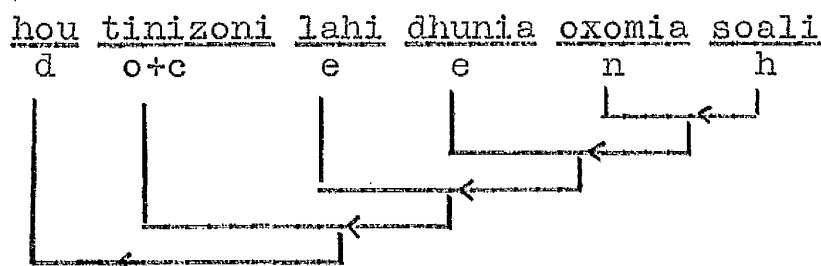
puroni aru oxomia kitab  
linker

As a rule, we can have coordinate modification only when both modifiers are epithets. Above phota and puroni were both epithets; hence the possibility of coordination. In the case of puroni and oxomia, one is epithet and the other one is nominal, hence the impossibility of coordinating them.

#### 5.61 Nesting modification :

In the subordinative constructions of the nominal group one modifier may be recursively nested within another. Each modifier defines and delimits the head. The more modifiers there are, the more defined and delimited the head.

The following example may be looked upon as a case of nesting one modifier within another.



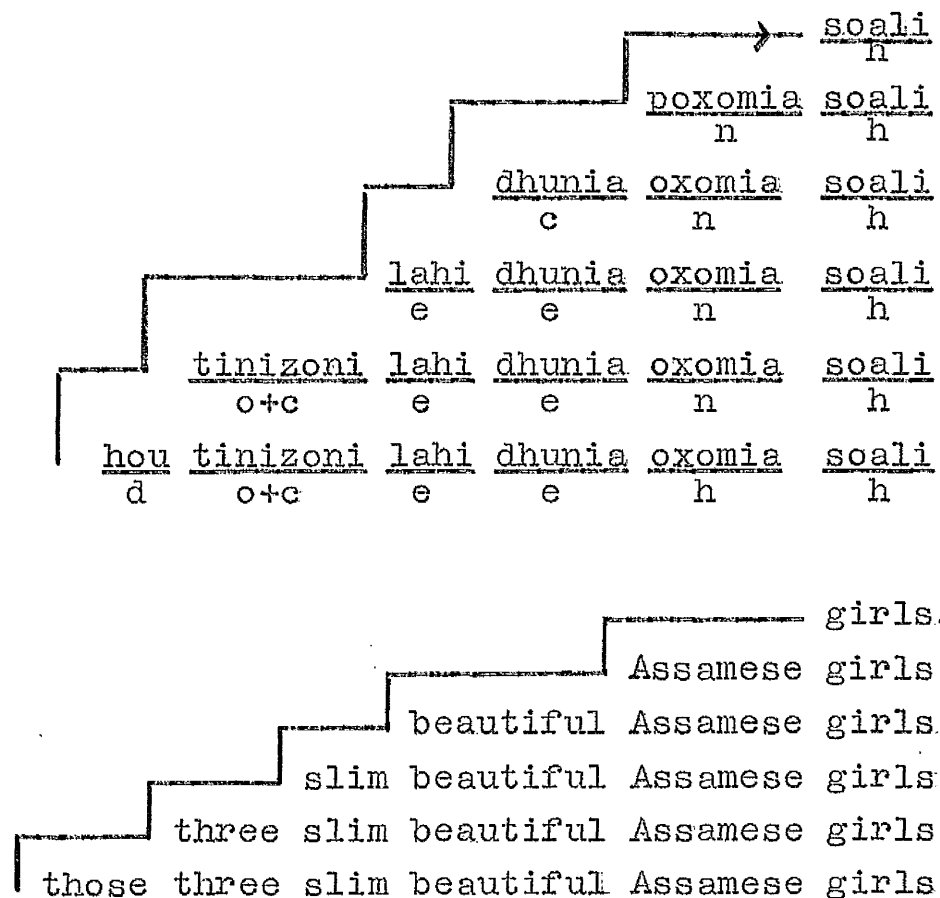
those three + c slim beautiful Assamese girls  
Those three beautiful slim Assamese girls

The arrows point towards the subordinate constituent grouping within each brace. The syntax of the word order is regressive with modifiers preceding h. The nominal group



exemplified above is the maximal expansion at m. We cannot expand the nominal group any further regressively. If we do, the expression will suffer from ontological deviations. However we can expand the nominal group progressively, that is, towards q which succeeds h in our formulation of the nominal group. We will discuss the expansion of q below (section 5.81).

This example also provides the key to the understanding of Assamese regressive syntax.



This diagram shows the head and the step by step inclusiveness of the modifiers. An arrow (as in the above diagrams) points from modifiers to the head, or from satellites to nucleus.

5.7 The head (h)

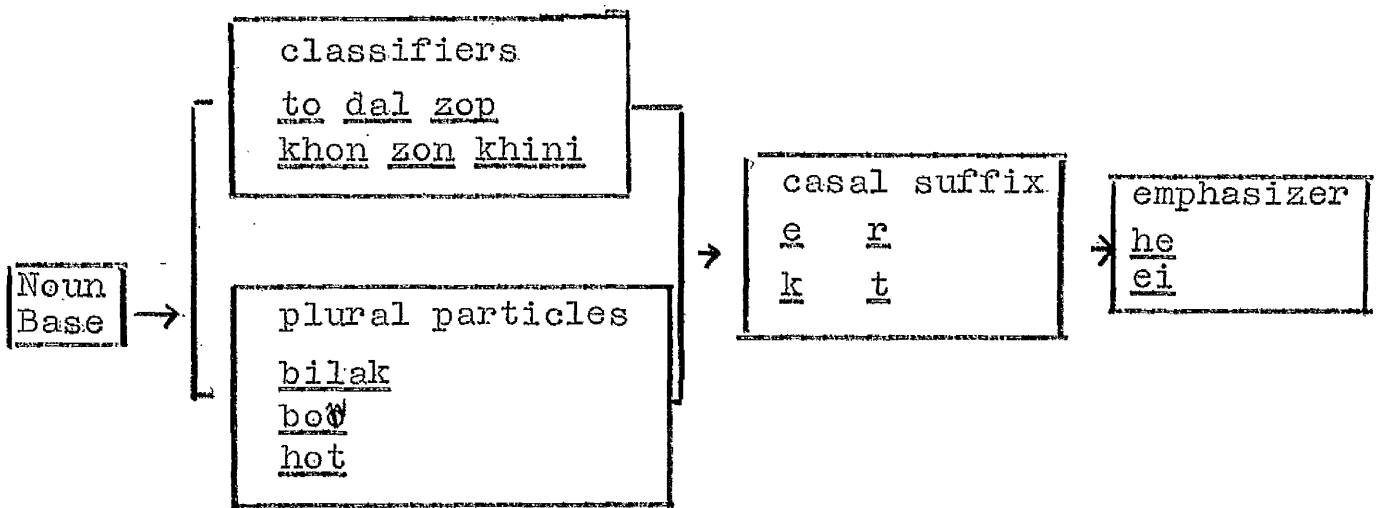
The 'head' is that primary element which has the potentiality of expounding the simple structure of the nominal group. Modifiers, qualifiers and emphasizeers are all optional. The head is obligatory and is expandable in terms of the optionals. The optionals in fact tend to define and delimit the head. The classifiers may be joined to the headword, and as we have discussed above, when they are suffixed to the head, the whole (h+c) is considered as a compound singular. The post-positive particles, such as casual suffixes are added to the (h+c). Since classifiers and plural particles (pp) are mutually exclusive, one or the other can be suffixed to the head, and only after that can it take the full battery of noun suffixes.

h+c	<u>hap</u> <u>dal</u>	<u>hap</u> <u>dalok</u>	( <u>k</u> object marker)
	h      c		
	snake the	<u>hap</u> <u>dale</u>	( <u>e</u> subject marker)
h+pp	<u>hap</u> <u>bilak</u>	<u>hap</u> <u>bilakok</u>	( <u>k</u> object marker)
	h      pp		
	The snakes	<u>hap</u> <u>bilake</u>	( <u>e</u> subject marker)

We cannot have the following sequences:

h+c+pp	* <u>hap</u> <u>dal</u> <u>bilak</u>
h+pp+c	* <u>hap</u> <u>bilak</u> <u>dal</u>

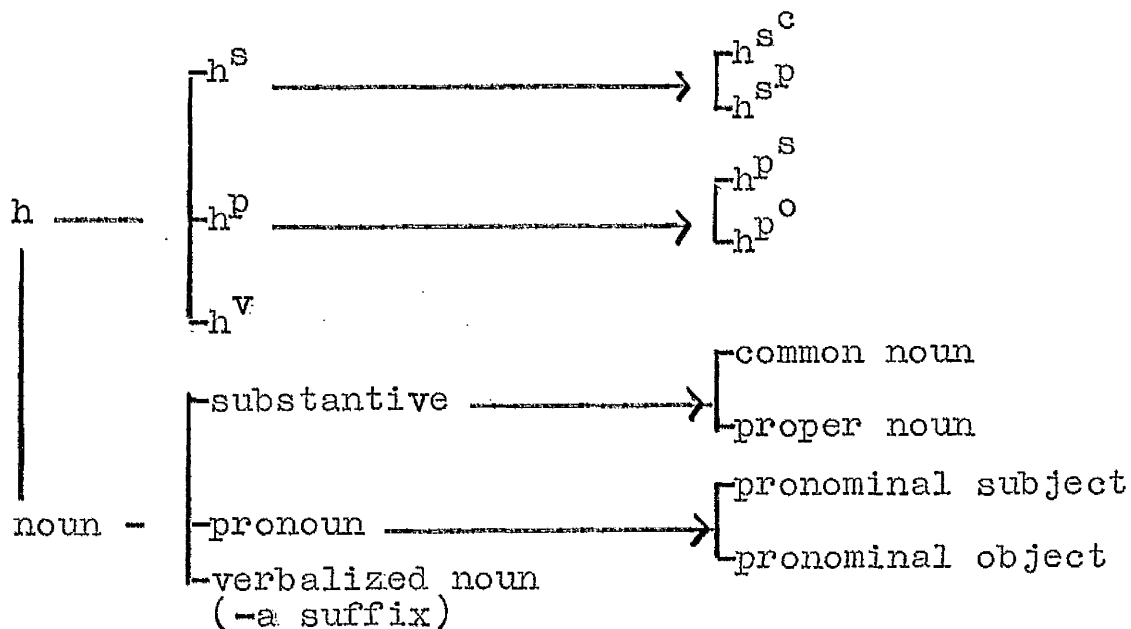
The following diagram summarizes the formation of the nominal head:



In each case the boxes indicate a class of morphemes. Starting from the left hand box, and selecting one item from each box proceeding in the direction of the arrows, any sequence which can be consecutively traced out is a legitimate Assamese headword.

#### 5.71 The secondary classes of the headword :

The exponent of h is the primary class, noun. The noun class is one of the two largest form classes in Assamese. The other is the verb word class. Noun breaks more delicately into the following secondary classes:



At h we can choose from among substantives, pronouns and verbalized nouns. This three-term system is marked by potentiality of modification, and ability to take classifiers and plural particles. A substantive is a noun class functioning in an expanded or expandable head of the nominal group. Substantives take classifiers. A pronoun is a nominal functioning in a non-expandable nominal group. A pronoun (except the demonstratives, relatives and interrogatives) cannot take classifiers. A verbalized noun can be modified and affixed with classifiers, but it cannot take the plural suffix.

#### 5.72 The substantive :

The substantive is a secondary class of the noun. It can operate as the head in nominal groups at S, O and C. There is a very wide area of overlap between substantives and pronouns. Strictly speaking, the pronouns are not a formal class in that they do not as a class show grammatical features which differentiate from other nouns. The pronouns are in fact a sub-class within the class of noun. However certain formal characteristics of pronouns can be noticed. The following are the differences between the substantives and the pronouns.

- 1) Substantives can be expanded by modifiers, but pronouns are not expandable in terms of modifiers.
- 2) The exponents of substantives constitute an open set, but those of pronouns form a closed set.
- 3) The system of person is crucial in the case of pronouns, but it is not relevant to the substantives.

4) The substantives can be affixed with classifiers but the pronouns (except the demonstratives, relatives and interrogatives) cannot be affixed with classifiers.

### 5.73 Subdivision of substantives :

The substantives may be divided into two choice classes (common noun and proper noun), forming a secondary system. The formal distinction between common nouns and proper nouns is that the former may be preceded by an indefinite pronoun, but the latter may not.

olop gakhir  
a little milk

We cannot say

\*olop mridula  
Mridula - a name of a girl

Common noun breaks into two choice classes, uncountable noun and countable noun, forming another secondary system. The formal distinction between the uncountable noun and the countable noun is that the former cannot co-occur with the cardinals together with classifiers, but the latter can.

We can say

ekhon kitap  
o+c h  
a book

But we cannot say

\*ekhon pani  
a water

Uncountable noun breaks into two choice classes, mass noun and abstract noun. The formal distinction between these two is that the former can be affixed by classifiers as well as by plural particles whereas the latter cannot be affixed by either.

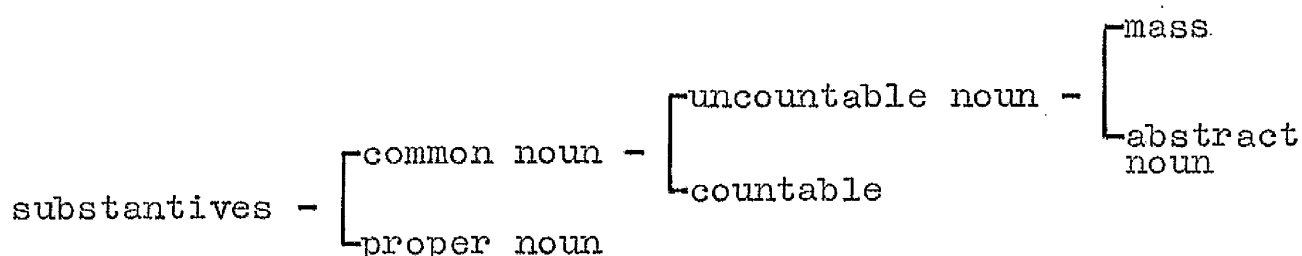
We can say

pani <u>khini</u>	'the water'
c	
pani <u>bilak</u>	'water' (plural sense)
pp	

But we cannot say

*hadhuta <u>khini</u>	'honesty'
c	
*hadhuta <u>bilak</u>	'honesties'
pp	

Diagrammatically we can show the subdivisions of substantives in the following way:



### 5.731 Some examples of substantives :

a) Mass nouns:	siahi	- ink
	gakhir	- milk
	phen	- foam

- |                     |          |                |
|---------------------|----------|----------------|
| b) Abstract nouns:  | hadhuta  | - honesty      |
|                     | bhodrota | - decency      |
|                     | hobhojta | - civilization |
|                     |          |                |
| c) Countable nouns: | kolom    | - pen          |
|                     | kitab    | - book         |
|                     | kagoz    | - paper        |
|                     | ghori    | - watch        |
|                     |          |                |
| d) Proper nouns:    | razes    | - Rajesh       |
|                     | anjoli   | - Anjoli       |
|                     | aroti    | - Arati        |
|                     | attrei   | - Atrevei      |

### 5.732 Plural particles (pp) :

The plural particles constitute a small closed set. Plural particles and classifiers are mutually exclusive. This means that either a classifier or a plural particle may be added to the noun base. There is no requirement that any of these plural particles be used. The most common plural particles are the following:

bor, hot, bilak, hokol

The plural particles indicate plurality. They do not have to be used. In particular, there is no requirement that plural particles must be used with the Assamese headword as in typical European languages. They can be suppressed and can be understood from the context. In Assamese plurality is not an obligatory grammatical category.

bialoi manuh ahise  
           A          S          P

to marriage man has come

People have come to the wedding

Sometimes the plural particles convey the definitive sense:

bialoi manuh bilak ahise  
 A noun base+pp p  
 S

To marriage men have come  
 The men (who are invited) have come to the wedding.

# 5.7321 Restrictions of co-occurrence of the plural particles :

As we have noted above, plural particles and classifiers are mutually exclusive. Plural particles cannot co-occur with ordinatives or quantifiers.

bialoi tinizon manuh ahise

to marriage three+e man has come  
 Three men have come to the marriage ceremony.

We cannot say

\*bialoi tinizon manuh bilak ahise  
 pp

However plural pronominal forms may be followed by ordinatives. This may be considered as a double plural.

hihot bilak gol  
 S

they pp went  
 They all went

tohot hokolo ahibi  
 S P

you+pp come  
 You all come

tomalok duo zoa  
 S

you+o go  
 Both of you go away



5.733 Gender :

There is no grammatical gender in Assamese as there is no gender concord or agreement. In case of pronominal reference, however, gender is to be taken into account. In Sanskrit, gender is relevant, not only for the selection of the correct singular or plural form of any given noun, but also for the determination of the verbs, adjectives, and other modifiers in construction with it. Take the following example from Sanskrit:

ekoh sundoroh balokoh gotoban  
one beautiful boy went

eka sundori balika gotoboi  
one beautiful girl went

The symbol = shows gender concord. Gender plays a relatively minor part in the grammar of Assamese in comparison with its role in other languages, such as Sanskrit. Gender in Assamese functions as sex identification. It is admissible to use feminine suffixes after adjectives or other qualifying terms to emphasize the sex. The most common female suffixes are i and oni.

bogoli - female crane  
boruani - Mrs. Barna

Qualifying terms of emphasis are mota and maiki (she)

mota hah - he duck  
maiki hah - she duck

Although in general gender concord does not operate in Assamese, there are a few cases where it does. The following

are examples of adjectival concord:

boga lora	- white boy
kola bolodh	- black bull
bogi soali	- white girl
koli gai	- black cow

An example of gender concord can also be found in one classifier.

ezon manuh	- one man
ezoni tirota	- one woman

#### 5.734 Case suffixes :<sup>14</sup>

The headword of the nominal group is analyzable into an obligatory stem followed optionally by a classifier or a plural particle and then followed optionally by a case suffix. The nucleus, that is the element which controls the external distribution of the headword, is the first element. A noun may have a case suffix manifested by zero. We can establish a five term system of case suffixes.

Case system -	[	subjective	( <u>e</u> )	]			
		-objective	( <u>k</u> )				
		-possessive	( <u>r</u> )				
		-locative	_____				
		-instrumental	( <u>re</u> )				
					[	t	stative
						<u>loi</u>	to-directional
						<u>pora</u>	from-directional

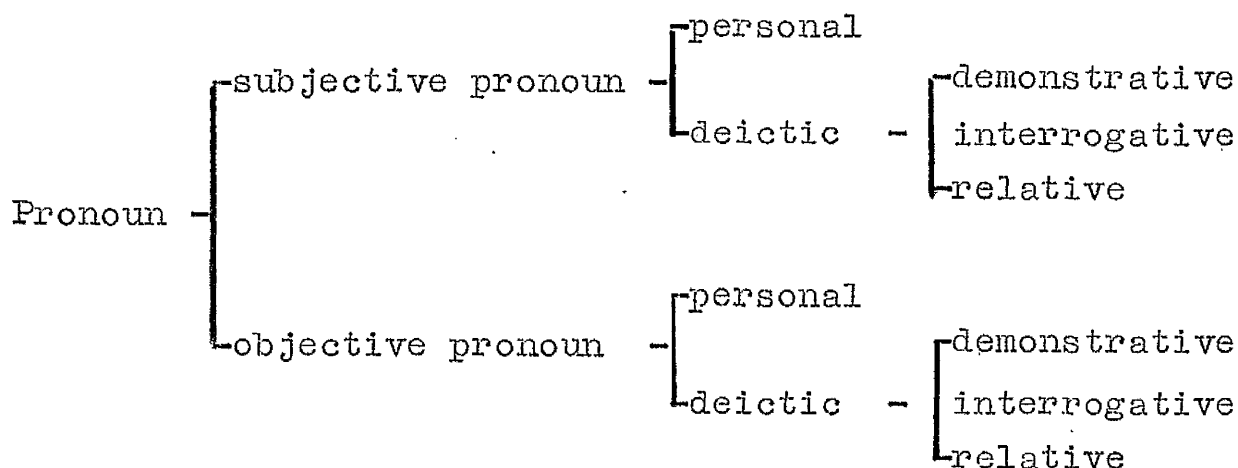
#### 5.74 Pronouns:

We can distinguish nouns from pronouns by formal criteria and establish pronouns as sub-class nouns. We may subdivide

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14) In recent years case has been viewed as an example of the centrality of syntax. According to Fillmore, semantic roles are called cases.

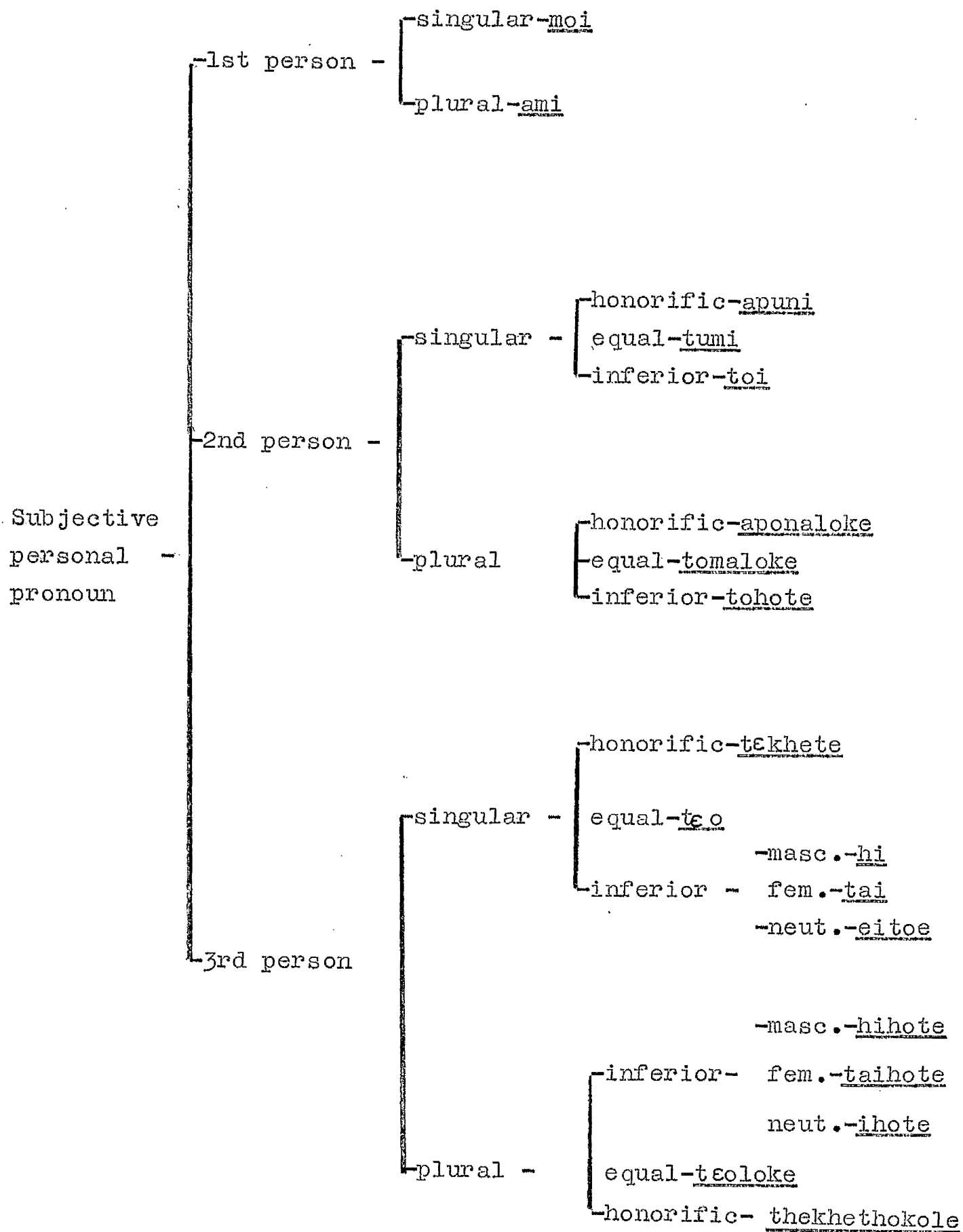
pronouns into the following secondary classes which can operate at h :



Pronoun may be subdivided into two choice classes, subjective and objective. The former can operate in nominal groups as S only. The latter can operate in nominal groups at O only. Both subjective and objective pronouns can be further subdivided into personal and deictic. The deictic pronouns may on a different dimension be still further subdivided into three choice classes: demonstrative, interrogative and relative. We have the following cross-classifications for all grammatical possibilities.

### 1. Personal (subjective and objective)

Both of these can be further subdivided along the different dimensions of person (first person, second, third); number (singular and plural); gender (masculine, feminine and neuter); and grade (honorific, equal and inferior). The following diagram maps out the subjective personal pronouns in the interlocking systems of person, number, gender and grade.



2. Demonstrative (subjective and objective)

Both of these are obligatorily followed by classifiers and then followed by case suffixes.

ei + c + s = eitoe 'this' (subject)  
c+suffix

hei + c + s = heidelok 'that' (object)  
c+suffix

hou + c + s = houzonok 'that' (object)  
c+suffix

3. Interrogative (subjective and objective)

kone - who kone kamto korise  
who the work has done  
Who has done the work?

kak - whom tumi kak matisala  
you whom called  
Whom did you call?

4. Relative (subjective and objective)

zone - who zone ahibo tso pabo  
who will come he will get  
Whoever comes will get (it)

zak - whom zak log poa tak koba  
whom company set him will tell  
Tell him whenever you see him.

Unlike the demonstratives, neither the interrogatives nor the relatives are obligatory but are optionally followed by classifiers. When they are suffixed by classifiers, they are obligatorily followed by case markers. The following

examples may clarify the point:

Interrogatives:

kontoe kailoi ahibo  
Int+c+cs

who+c+case suffix tomorrow will come  
Who will come tomorrow?

Relatives:

zizonik bhal poa taik nia  
Rel+c+cs

who+c+case suffix good get her take away  
Take the girl you love away

However, if the interrogatives and relatives function as modifiers to the head, the case suffix will be transferred to the head.

zizoni soalik bhal poa taik nia  
Rel+c +h+case suffix

who+c girl+object marker good get her take away  
Take away the girl you love.

## 5.8 The qualifier (q) :

The qualifier is expounded by that primary class which immediately follows the h(ead). Qualifiers are different from modifiers in the following ways:

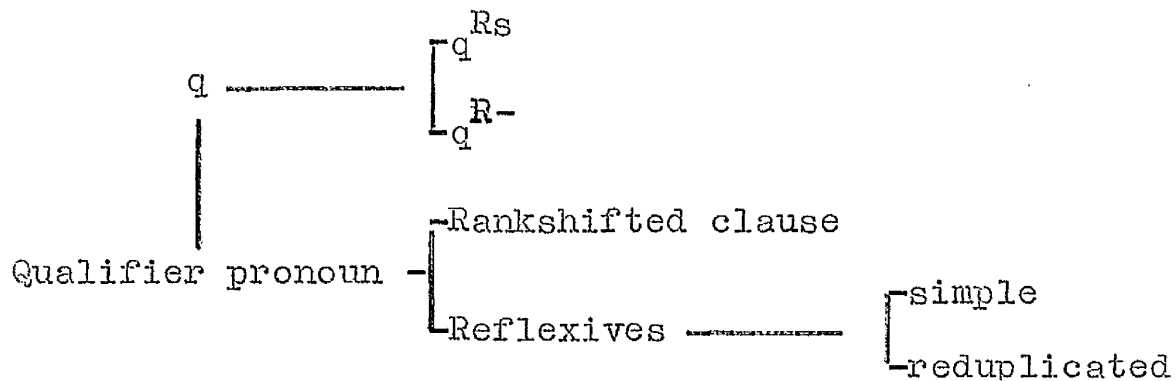
1. Positionally, modifiers precede the head, but qualifiers succeed the head, as we have stated in the formula, (m) h (q).
2. Qualifiers do not take classifiers, as do modifiers or heads. Nor do they take postpositive particles (e.g. *casal*

suffixes), except the emphatic particle. The postpositive particles indeed distinguish the qualifier from the headword. The qualifier is that word in nominal group structure, which occurs immediately after the postpositive particle.

3. Modifiers may be subdivided but qualifiers may not. Qualifiers have limited capacities for patterning with the head of the nominal group; hence their subdivisions are limited.

#### 5.81 The systems at q :

Qualifiers may be subdivided into rankshifted<sup>15</sup> relative clause and reflexive pronoun, that is, when there is only one occurrence of q, we have a choice between these two. In normal spoken Assamese, the rankshifted relative clause at q is rare, but the reflexive pronoun at q is quite common. Diagrammatically the system at q can be shown in the following way:




---

15) The rankshifted relative clause at q is always a downward rankshift, that is to say, a clause used as a word, functioning as an element in the structure of the nominal group

5.811 Rankshifted relative clause at q :

This is a subclass of the dependent clause which operates at q in the nominal group structure.

<u>orunar</u>	<u>bhoni</u>	<u>jekok</u>	<u>zak</u>	<u>moi</u>	<u>bhal</u>	<u>pao</u>
	h		o	s		p
<hr/>						
q (rankshifted clause)						

of Arun sister whom I love get  
Aruna's sister whom I love.

<u>eikhon</u>	<u>kitab</u>	<u>zikhon</u>	<u>tumi</u>	<u>porhisa</u>
m	h	o	s	p
<hr/>				
q (rankshifted clause)				

this book which you have read  
The book which you have read.

In spoken Assamese a rankshifted clause at q reduces acceptability. In written Assamese for stylistic reasons, rankshifted clauses at q are fairly acceptable.

5.812 Simple reflexive :

The reflexives constitute a very limited set of word class operating at q. The following are reflexive examples.

sojñ	}	- himself
nize		
apuni - herself		

<u>hou</u>	<u>soalizoni</u>	<u>nize</u>	<u>ahise</u>
m	h	q	
<hr/>			
S			P

that girl herself has come.  
That girl has come on her own.



hotrubilak apuni ubhoti gol

h                      q  
-----  
S                                      P

the enemy themselves went back  
The enemy retreated of their own accord.

Sometimes two different qualifiers are used side by side for the sake of emphasis.

rozai sojno nize adex disil

h                      q                      q  
-----  
S                                      O                      P

the king himself order gave  
The king himself gave the order.

#### 5.8121 Reduplicated reflexive :

There is only one reflexive (nize) that can be reduplicated. It is an indeclinable word and can be affixed with any person.

moi nize nize kamto koriso

h                      q                      q  
-----  
S                                      O                      P

I myself the work have done  
I have done the work myself.

tso nize nizethog khale

h                      q                      q  
-----  
S                                      O                      P

he himself deception ate  
He deceived himself.

#### 5.813 Honorifics at q :

The honorifics such as deb, danoria, babu and sahab are polite forms of address added to the headword. Honorifics

may be looked upon as components of the headword.

<u>kakati deb</u>	- Mr. Kakati
<u>ahmed saheb</u>	- Mr. Ahmad
<u>borua danoria</u>	- Mr. Barua
<u>zadab babu</u>	- Mr. Jadab

Here the honorific words occur after the headwords; so positionally they should be treated as q's. Yet these nominal groups are not h+q. The reason for not considering them as h+q is that honorifics occur between the head and the postpositive particles (e.g. casal suffixes). But the formal criterion for establishing q after h is that q comes immediately after the postpositive particles.

rame nize  
h      q

Ram+subject marker himself  
Ram himself.

But

ram babue nize  
h      q

Mr. Ram+subject marker himself  
Mr. Ram himself.

#### 5.814 q functioning as head :

In our description of the Assamese nominal group, q is defined as a posthead element and is expounded by the class, postnoun, of the unit, word. Take the following examples:

tomalok sario zone

you four c  
~~You all four~~  
All four of you

ami hokoloe

we all

The problem with tomalok siniozone, is whether we consider o+c as an element functioning at q. The answer is that within the framework of the definition, we cannot say that tinio zone is q because (1) classifiers do not occur at q, and (2) the subject marker cannot be affixed to the q. Nor can the expression tomalolok tinio zone be considered a compound work, because we can insert the emphatic particle ei inbetween. Normally we cannot insert the emphatic particle between the components of a compound word. We should therefore consider these two headwords to be in apposition. When two words are in an appositive relation operating at h, the postpositive particles such as the casal suffix come finally.

ram dokanie

h      h + subject marker

Ram, the shopkeeper.

Similarly

ami hokoloe

h      h

we all

are in appositive relation.

## 5.9      The emphasizer (em) :

The emphasizer is that class of the unit word which cannot, on its own, stand and expound the simple structure of a nominal group. It is a bound morpheme. Positionally,

it succeeds the element it emphasizes. The emphasizees constitute a small closed set. They are:

ei he kebol matro

#### 5.91 The distribution of the emphasizee :

The emphasizee always follows and never precedes the main elements of the nominal, namely m, h and q. em does not occur after a rankshifted clause. Structurally the following sequences are acceptable:

##### Structure

##### Example

m em h

pas khon he kitab  
m em h

five only book  
Only five books

m h em

pas khon kitab he  
m h em

just only five books

m h q em

duzon lorai nize ei  
m h q em

two boys himself only  
Only two boys themselves

Sometimes two emphasizees can occur in the same sequence:

h em em

rame he kebol kanto koribo  
h em em

S O P  
Ram+em only the work will do  
Only Ram himself will do the work

m em h em

mor he kukurto he heral  
n em h em

S P  
my+em dog only lost  
Only my dog was missing.

THE VERBAL GROUP

## 6.0

The verbal group is that class of the unit group which operates at P in clause structure. Morphologically it is a grouping of verbal elements among which they obtain certain interior relations determining the operation of classes of the unit next below.

6.1 Primary elements of the structure of the verbal group:

The primary elements of the structure of the verbal group are:

V = Verb (Nucleus of verbal group) (set)<sup>1</sup>  
 N = Negator (Constant)  
 Op = Operator (Variables)  
 Ip = Interrogative (Constant)  
 D = Dubitative element (Variables)  
 E = Emphasizer (Variables)

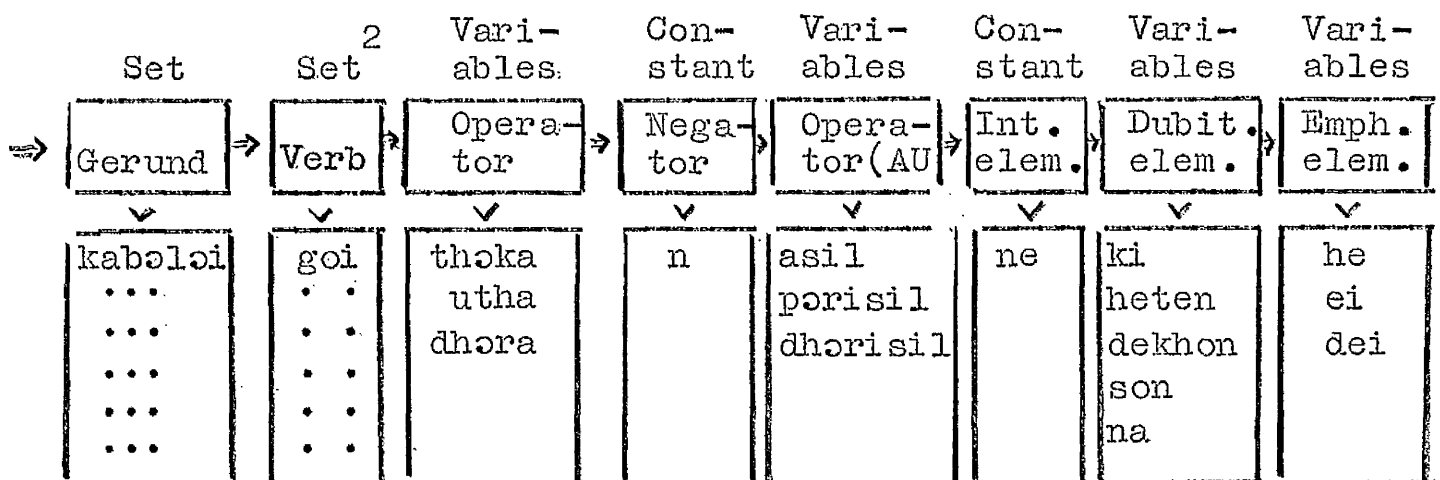
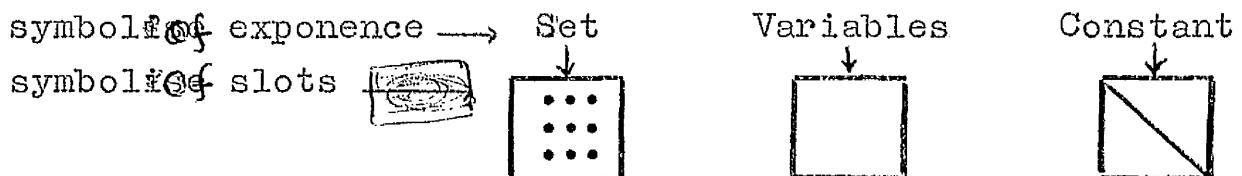
These elements are expounded by different primary word classes.  $S_V$  and  $O_p$  are both positionally and exponentially distinguished.  $S_V$  precedes Operator and is expounded

- 
1. a. Set: By this we mean here items of which there is an indefinite number (i.e. members of an open set).
- b. Variables: By this we mean here items of which there are relatively few and which are members of a delineable closed set.
- c. Constant: By this we mean here an item of which there is only one (i.e. it is the only member of its set).

by the word-class verb of the unit word.  $O_p$  may follow, but may not precede V.  $O_p$  is expounded by the class auxiliary of the unit word. N normally precedes the element it negates. N is expounded by the class negator. It can be followed in a verbal sequence only by D or E or both. D must follow I and is expounded by the class dubitative. E may emphasize any of the other structural elements except I. It always occurs after the element which it emphasizes.

### 6.12 The verbal sequence :

The verbal sequence can be summarized by means of the accompanying diagrams. In the diagrams, the boxes indicate either a morpheme or a class of morphemes. One may start from the left hand side in the first box and proceed along the lines always in the direction of the arrows. One must move only from left to right. The following slots indicate Set, Variables and Constant respectively.



2)  $V$  = dictionary entry form of verbs + concordial relation with persons.  $V = L + G$ . Lexical verb base + concordial relation with persons. E.G. 1st person kha + o khao  
2nd person kha + ua khoa  
3rd person kha + ai khai

The maximum expansion of verbal sequence:

kabɔlɔi goi thɔka nasil neki he  
 to cat going stay-hasn't Int. Emph.  
                                   ing  
 Wasn't (he) going away to cat?

6.13 Possible combinations of primary elements in the structure of the verbal group :

No. of elements	Structure	Exponents	
One	V	kha ahise zam	eat has come I shall go
Two	V Op(erator)	khaiase kɔribɔ pai dhɔri pelale	is eating may have done cough it up
	NV	Nahile nipindho nɔkɔre	(he) didn't come <sup>3</sup> (I) don't wear doesn't do
	V I(nterrogator)	zoane dhisilne khamne	do (you) go? did (he) eat? Shall (I) eat?
	V D(ubitative)	oha hetɛn khoa neki Do ahiba son	if (he) came you really eat <sup>3</sup> Please come <sup>meat?</sup>
	V E(mphasizer)	kɔrahe ahilei	do did come
Three	V OE	ahib pai	He definitely came

3) A tendency towards vowel harmony is to be noted here. Assamese has a complete negative conjugation for all verbs formed by prefixing the negative particle n plus a vowel which is determined by the vowel of the first syllable of the conjugated root.

<u>No. of elements</u>	<u>Structure</u>	<u>Exponents</u>
Three	VDE	<u>aha</u> <u>na</u> <u>he</u> V D E Why don't (you) come
		<u>khale</u> <u>dekhon</u> <u>he</u> V D E I think he has eaten
	NVI	<u>no</u> <u>porah</u> <u>ne</u> N V I don't you read
	NVE	<u>na</u> <u>hiba</u> <u>dei</u> N V E do not come
Four	NVDE	<u>ni</u> <u>dila</u> <u>dekhon</u> <u>he</u> D E (You) really didn't give
Five	VNOID <sup>4</sup>	<u>porhi</u> <u>an</u> <u>asil</u> <u>ne</u> <u>ki</u> <sup>5</sup> V N O I D Was (he) not reading
Six	VNOIDE	<u>kho</u> <u>an</u> <u>asil</u> <u>ne</u> <u>ki</u> <u>he</u> V N O I D E Did he not really eat?

The following examples illustrate a gradual expansion of the verbal sequence:

V	-----	khai	(He) eats
N+V	-----	nakhai	(He) doesn't eat
N+V+I	-----	nakhaine	Doesn't he eat?
N+V+I+D	-----	nakhaineki	Really doesn't he eat
N+V+I+D+E	-----	nakhainekihe	Really and truly doesn't he
V+N+O+I+D+E	-----	khainasilnekihe	Was he not really eating <sup>eat</sup>

4) Note that where there is concatenation of the S and O element with N, the N is construed as negating the meaning.

5) In the conjugation of the Assamese verb (which I have discussed below) number is not marked. (cont'd next page)



This verbal sequence cannot be discontinuous. The sequence is constant. That is to say, a part of it may not occur at some other part of the formula. Nor any component of the sequence occur at the end of the clause.

We are assuming that the structure of a grammatical word in Assamese is composed of obligatory stem (nucleus) and optional affix(es) (periphery).

Similarly, the verbal sequence can be analysed in terms of core (nucleus) and periphery; at the core a system of person-concord operates

	V (base form) constitute the nucleus
N	-(affixes) constitute the periphery
O	
I	
D	
E	

The verbal sequence is: + (V) + (N O I D E)

These verbal elements are grouped together in terms of their internal structure as well as in terms of their distribution and external function. In the following sections we will examine them thoroughly. The verbal sequence cannot be discontinuous, i.e. portions of the nominal sequence cannot be inserted within it.

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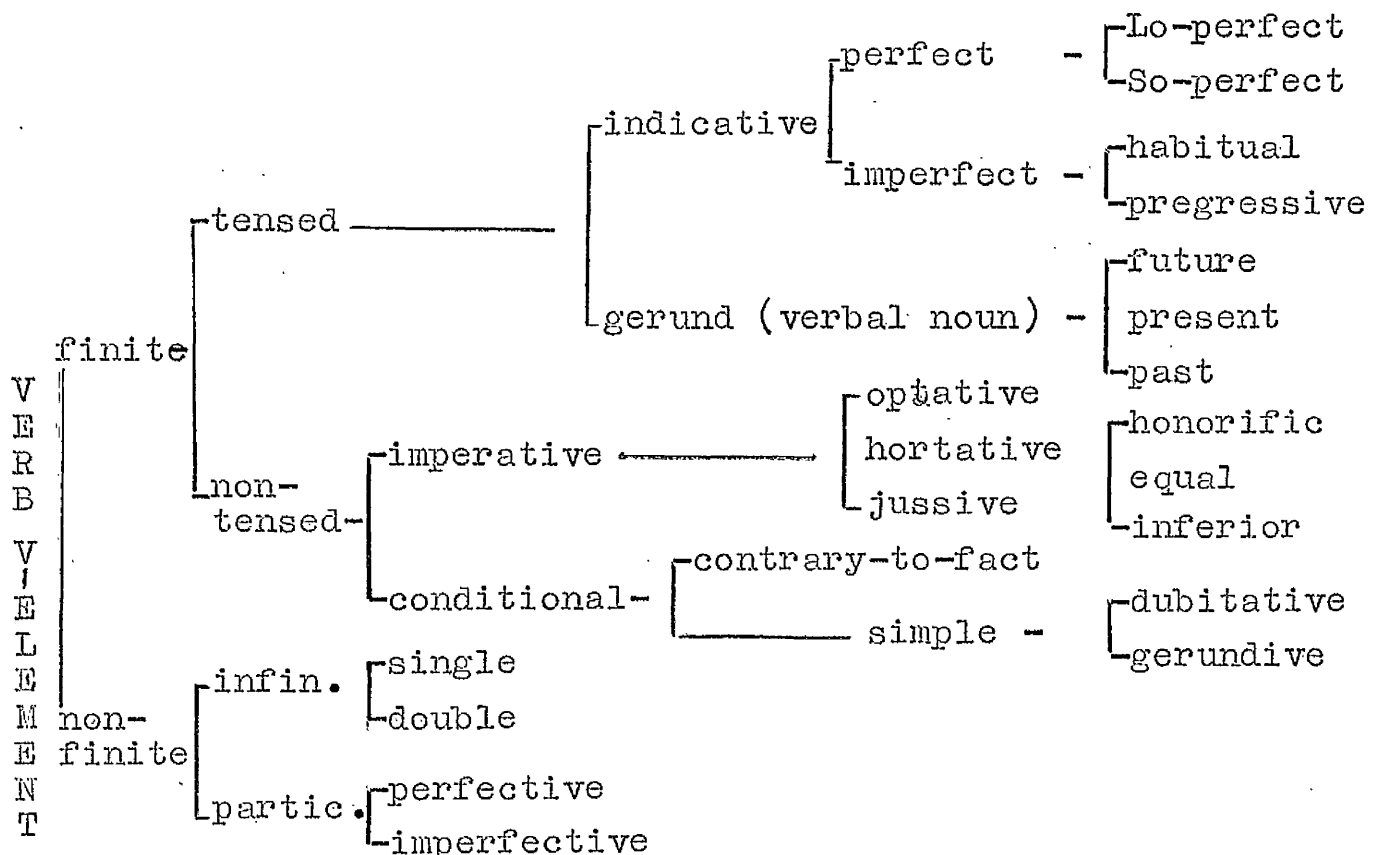
(footnote cont'd from previous page) The conjugation is formed from the verbal base to which is added the personal suffix. There is neither number nor gender concord.

## 6.2 The V element :

The V element is expounded by the class verb of the unit word. Verbs serve as the core of the verbal sequence. They may occur intransitively (with no object), transitively (with one object), or ditransitively (with two objects). They may also occur equationally (with a complement) or predicatively (with an adjunct).<sup>6</sup>

### 6.21 The substantive verb :

Verbs in Assamese are marked by inflection for person, tense, mood and aspect. The Assamese verbal system is not precise and well-knit. Our principal concern here is with the outward grammatical forms. The V element enters into systems of various delicacy as shown in the diagram.



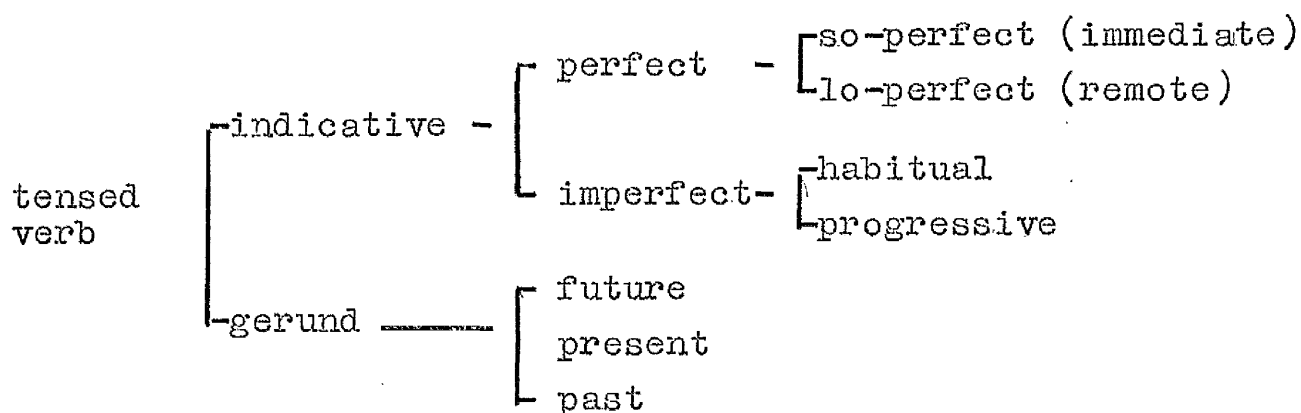
6.211 Finite and non-finite verb :

Early in delicacy the verb takes part in the binary system of finiteness and is subdivided into finite and non-finite verbs. The main distinction between finite and non-finite verbs is that the former (F) can operate as a simple verbal group in independent clause structure, but the latter (non-F) cannot.

6.212 Subdivision of the finite verb :

The finite verb may be divided into tensed finite and non-tensed finite verbs. The tensed finite verb can occur with the exponent tense, but the non-tensed verbs cannot.

The tensed verb can be broken into indicative and gerund (verbal noun). The former can select for aspect, but the latter cannot.




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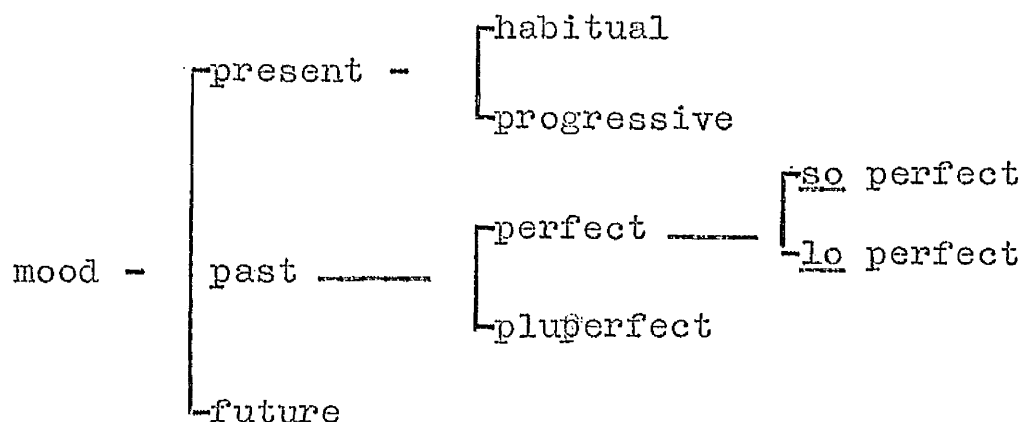
(footnote 6 from previous page)

\$P	intransitive	SOP	transitive
SAP	predicative	SO O2P	ditransitive
SPC	equational	SOCP	transitive-complement
SCP	complement	SOAP	transitive-adjunct

(See Chapter IV)

6.213 Mood :

Mood breaks into tense (past, present and future) and tense breaks into aspect (perfect, nonperfect and habitual progressive). The following diagram shows the interrelationships of the mood-tense-aspect network:



The conjugation of the finite verb kor - "do" in the present habitual and present progressive is shown here.<sup>7</sup>

Present habitual (base form plus -o/-a/-e)

1st person:      moi (ami) koro  
                    I (we) do

2nd person:      tumi (tomaloke) kora  
                    toi (tehote) kor  
                    you do

3rd person:      tsokore (tsoloke) kore  
                    tsakhete (tsakhethakole) kore  
                    he/she (they) do(es)

---

7) Assamese has a complete conjugation for all verbs. It is formed by adding personal affixes to the finite verb base. Person-concord is the basis of the conjugation of an Assamese verb. Number and gender are not marked in the verb.

Present progressive: (base form plus -iso/-isa/-ise)

1st person:	moi (ami) koriso I am (we are) doing
2nd person:	tumi (tomaloke) korisa you are doing
3rd person:	hi/tai (hihote/teoloke) korise he/she is (they are) doing

#### 6.214 Ambiguous tense form :

The forms which result from adding the suffixes iso-isa-ise to the base are ambiguous between the present progressive and present perfect tenses. Thus

moi kamto koriso  
I work doing

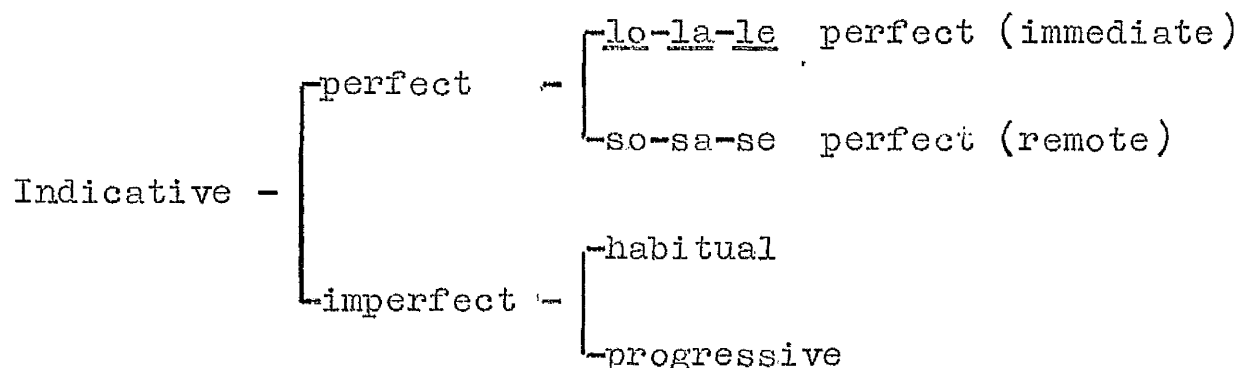
could mean either

"I am doing the work" or "I have done the work",  
depending on the context.

#### 6.215 Perfect and imperfect verb :

The indicative verb selects for aspect. The system of aspect has two terms: perfect and imperfect. Morphologically the former is marked by the presence of the personal suffixes. The immediate perfect is marked by the suffixes (1st person/2nd/3rd) iso/-isa/-ise. The remote perfect is marked by the suffixes -ilo/-ila/-ile.

The imperfect breaks into the habitual and the progressive. The progressives are bound verbs and cannot stand on their own.



#### 6.216 Other tenses :

Past tense: (base form (kor-) plus -ilo/-ila/-ile)

1st person: moi (ami) korilo  
I (we) did

2nd person: tumi (tomaloke) korila  
You did

3rd person: tɛo (tɛoloke) korile  
He (they) did

Pluperfect: (base form plus -isilo/-isila/-isil)

1st person: moi (ami) korisilo

2nd person: tumi (tomaloke) korisila

3rd person: tɛo (tɛoloke) korisil

The difference between the past tense and the pluperfect is a traditional one. Whereas the past tense

expresses action or state that has happened or existed in the past, the pluperfect expresses an action or state completed or come to an end prior to some past point in time specified or implied in the verbal context.

Future: (base form plus -m/-ba/-bo)

1st person: moi (ami) korim  
I (we) shall do

2nd person: tumi (tomaloke) koriba  
you will do

3rd person: teo (teloke) koribo  
he (they) will do

## 6.22 The verbal noun :

The verbal noun in Assamese is declined for the five cases usual in Assamese nouns in the present tense. In the future tense there are only three case forms and in the past two as shown in the following table. Whether the past form should be treated as a noun or a participle is open to question.<sup>8</sup>

The verbal noun forms of the verb kor - "do" :

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Future</u>	<u>Past</u>
Nominative	kora		
Genitive	korar	koribor	
Dative	koralai	koriboloi	
Accusative	korak	korbo	
Locative	korote		korilot having done korile on having done

8) The basic difference between the participle (cont'd next page)

The future form is used when there is an idea of purpose or desire.

moi koribo khuziso

I doing want

I want to do (it)

moi koriboloi khuziso

It is remarkable that though these forms are treated in many ways as nouns, they can take both subject and object as if they were verbs.

tomar kora bhal

S A

your doing good

What you are doing is good

moi eito korar homoit hi ahise

A S P

I this of doing time he came

He came when I was doing this.

hi kam kora usit (hoi)

S O

he work doing proper is

He ought to work.

---

(footnote cont'd from previous page) (discussed below in detail) and the verbal noun is that the former functions as a verbal adjective. It qualifies a noun but retains some verbal properties (e.g. it shows tense and governs an object). The verbal noun on the other hand being a nominalization of a verb, can be declined like a noun. A verbal noun can be used attributively as well as predicatively as shown below.

kam kora manuhzon gol (kora-verbal noun used  
job working man went away attributively)

tai bhalpai mor likha (likha-verbal noun used predicatively)  
she likes my writing

Here likha must be nominal since it is preceded by the deictic mor which signals that the head of the nominal group is coming. A verbalized noun (or a nominalized verb) can also stand for a substantive if it is affixed with a classifier.

tomar likhakhini bhal

S A

your writing good

Your writing is good.

tar korato bea hoise

S A P

his doing+c bad has become

What he has done is bad.



In languages such as Latin, Greek, French and English, a verbal noun formed from a transitive verb can govern an object, but cannot have a subject.

In Assamese the subject and verb seem to be regarded as together forming a verbal noun, which can then be declined, and if the verb is transitive, can govern an object.

moi klothato koat tso gol

I the word having said he went away  
He went away when I told him about it.

A common use of the verbal noun in the present tense is as follows:

tumi kamto kora usit asil  
you the work doing proper was  
You should have done the job.

<u>taloi</u>	<u>tomar</u>	<u>zoato</u>	<u>bhal</u>	<u>hoa</u>	<u>nai</u>
A	S		P		

there your going good is not  
You shouldn't have gone there.

In the first example here, tumi is the subject of the verbal noun kora and kam is its object. The whole phrase is taken as the subject of the verb asil and is qualified by the adjective usit.

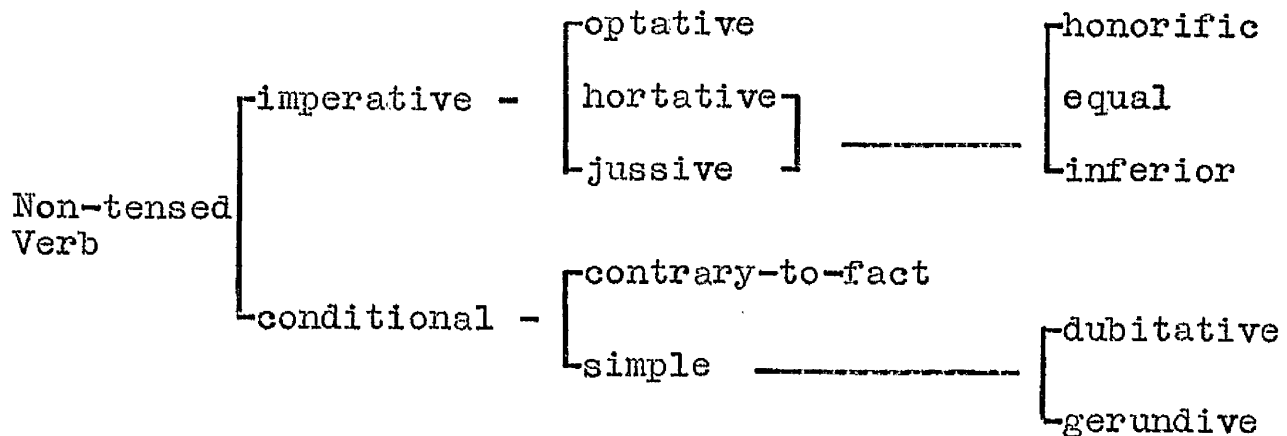
### 6.3 The non-tensed verb :

The non-tensed verb may more delicately be subdivided into imperative and conditional.<sup>9</sup> The first of these partially

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9) We prefer here the term conditional to subjunctive.  
Assamese verbs have no forms specially inflected for conditional  
(cont'd next page)

enters the system of grade and the other enters the system of modality.



### 6.31 Optative :

In some languages there is an optative word, that is, a set of verbal forms to indicate wishes. There is no optative word in Assamese. However, in a few cases, chiefly fixed phrases or minor patterns, wishes are expressed by the use of the subjunctive.<sup>10</sup>

tumi zen huki hoa  
you wish happy be  
I wish you happiness.

rozar mongol hook  
of king prosperity be  
May the king be prosperous.

tomar itea puron hook  
your wish fulfilled be  
May your wish be fulfilled.

---

9-cont'd from previous page) tenses. In places of inflected forms, Assamese uses either the tenses of the indicative mood or various auxiliary or modal verbs.

10) The subjunctive mood and optative mood are identical.

6.32 Hortative :

In ordinary colloquial Assamese the sense of command is softened by adding pleonastic particles after fully inflected verbal forms. The particles are son dei/de na. In English command and request patterns, the subject word is unnecessary; in Assamese, however, the use of the subject word is optional though not frequently used. The pleonastic particles are bound morphemes.

Khoa son  
eat PP

Please eat (PP= pleonastic particle)

kali ahiba dei  
tomorrow come PP

Please come tomorrow

taloi zoa na  
There go PP

Please go there.

In speaking, intonation<sup>11</sup> is important. It can make a plain imperative polite.

6.33 Jussive :

The hortative and the jussive are in almost complementary distribution. Both enter into the system of grade, with overlap of function.

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11) Intonation is so natural to us that it is hard to stand back and understand what it does.

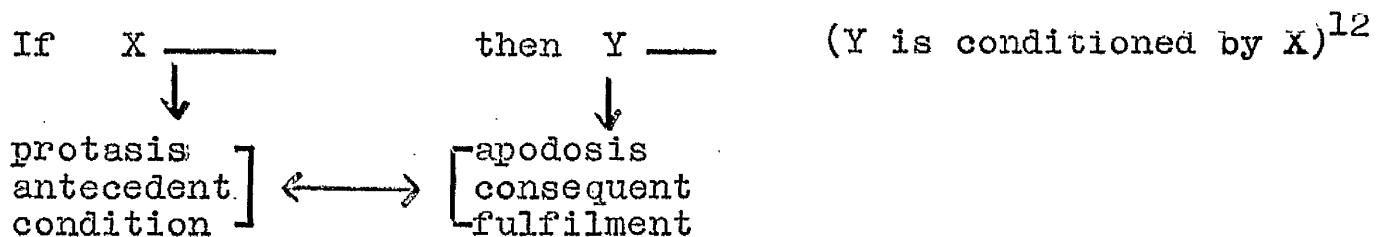
ahiba - command

ahiba - question



added to the past tense in the apodosis. In the protasis either the same form is used with the subjunctive zodi (if) or else heten is subjoined to the past participle (-a) without zodi. In the protasis heten may often be substituted by the verbal noun ending in -ile.

We have three contrastive frames of conditional sentences with semantic difference. The formal conditional frame is:



- (a)    zodi tumi kola heten/t o    ahil he ten  
          if    you    said+clitic,        he came+clitic  
          If you had told him he would have come
- (b)    tumi kola heten/teo    ahil heten
- (c)    tumi kole            /teo    ahile heten

Here (a), (b), (c) mean that 'you didn't tell him, so he didn't come.'. The form of the conditional structure as well as its function may be called contrary-to-fact. The

---

12) The conditional probability is based on one of the logical relations implication. (If X=Y then X<sup>2</sup>=Y<sup>2</sup>). The if-then relationship is sequentially ordered, that is to say X precedes Y or X is followed by Y.

Logical relations:    1. conjunct: both X and Y  
                           2. disjunct: either X or Y  
                           3. implication: If X then Y

formal criterion of the contrary-to-fact condition is that in the protasis (X) we have the two possibilities shown. In the apodosis (Y), however, only one possibility exists as shown.

<u>X</u>	<u>Y</u>
protasis	apodosis
I. Conjunctive zodi-past + heten ----- past + heten	
II Verbal noun (-le) -- past + heten	

The contrary-to-fact conditional may also be called the rejected conditional, because the condition is one that is impossible, or one that is considered unlikely to be fulfilled.

I	zodi moi sorai holo heten/ oxomoloi urigolo heten
II	- moi sorai hole - oxomoloi urigolo heten
	If I bird had been to Assam flying would have
	gone
	If I had been a bird I would have flown to Assam.

#### 6.341 The simple conditionals :

We can have open condition or factual condition (contrasted with theoretical condition). The speaker does not declare that the condition will be realized or that it will not be realized. He leaves the question open or unanswered. There are many possible combinations or tenses in the main clause (apodosis) and the subsidiary clause (protasis).

zodi moi aho tso zabo<sup>13</sup>  
 if I come he go (fut.)  
 If I come, he'll go.

zodi tumi aha tso zabo  
 If you come he go (fut.)  
 If you come, he'll go.

zodi tso ahe moi zam  
 if he come I go (fut.)  
 If he comes, I'll go.

moi khale tso khabo  
 If I eat he'll eat.

moi khale tso khai  
 If I eat he eats.

tumi khale moi kham  
 If you eat I'll eat.

tso khale tumi khoa  
 If he eats you eat.

Form-structure:            Verbal noun ---- future  
                               (V-le) ----- present

Note that when the verbal noun (V+ le) occurs as the protasis of the conditional, only present or future tense may occur in the apodosis.

---

13) \*moi aho, tso zabo is ungrammatical. The conjunctive zodi is obligatory. But Y may precede X, that is, tso zabo zodi moi aho is possible. \*tso zabo moi aho is not possible in the conditional sense.

The infinitival suffix in Assamese is ibo (its extended form is iboloi)

moi koribo        paro  
 moi koriboloi    paro  
 I    to do        am able  
 I can do (it)

The infinitive consists of the base or dictionary form of the verb plus the -bo or -boloi suffix. Together with the lexical-verb component, the infinitive constitutes a verbal phrase.

teo ahiboloi khuzise  
 he    to come    want  
 He wants to come.

#### 6.4.1 The double infinitives :

As in German, we can have constructions with double infinitives in Assamese.

moi bhat khaboloi zabo khozo  
 I    rice to eat    to go want  
 I want to go for dinner.

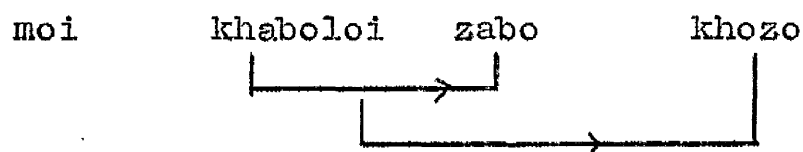
teo zaboi hudhibopare  
 he    to go to ask can  
 He may ask to go.

moi kamto koriboloi zabo lage  
 I    the work to do    to go need  
 I have to go and do the work



The following syntactic features are to be noted in constructions with double infinitives.

- I The second infinitive may only take the -bo form, not that with -boloi.
- II The syntagmatic relations between the first infinitive and second infinitive on the one hand and the lexical verb on the other are that the first infinitive governs the second infinitive, and that the first and second together govern the final verb.



The plain infinitive has already been described (6.4). There is a negative form consisting of the particle n plus a vowel determined by the vowel of the first syllable of the verb base.

khaboloi	-	nakhaboloi
to eat	-	not to eat
koboloi	-	nokoboloi
to speak	-	not to speak
kiniboloi	-	nikiniboloi
to buy	-	not to buy
uthiboloi	-	nuthiboloi
to rise	-	not to rise

Infinitival functions are various. The infinitive is a grammatical form that can occupy the position of subject,

object or complement in a sentence.

zaboloi bhal lage  
S            A            P

to go      good sticks

It is nice to go (To go is nice).

hi ahiboloi kole  
S            O            P

he to come    says

He's asked (...) to come.

#### 6.42 Participle :

Assamese has two participles, the adverbial and the adjectival. The adverbial participle is ~~im~~perfect in aspect and ends with the suffix -i. The adjectival past participle is perfect in aspect and ends with the suffix -a. The participial suffixes are added to the base form of the verb. Neither participle participates in any concord relationship.<sup>14</sup> The adjectival participle is functionally different from the adverbial participle in another respect. It may occur as the verbal noun (see p.267).

#### 6.421 The adverbial participle :

hi koi      gol

he saying went

Saying this, he went away.

rame likhi    hex    korile

Ram writing finish done

Ram has finished writing.

---

<sup>14</sup>) Although both participles are satellites to the nucleus of the structure (i.e. the finite verb), the first is adverbial (directly modifies the verb), and the second adnominal (directly modifies a nominal).

gopale hui      porise

Gopal sleeping fell

Gopal fell asleep

kəkobe bhat kai      ghoroloi gol

Keshab rice eating to home went

Since the Assamese adverbial participle partakes neither of the nature of noun or adjective it is not to be confounded with the infinitive or the participle. It may be translated either by the present participle or the simple verb, followed by the conjunction and. For example,

hi bagh to gulial marile

he tiger the shooting killed

He killed the tiger by shooting it

or

He shot the tiger and killed it.

#### 6.43 The adjectival participle :

The suffix -a is used in several fundamentally different functions. It is used to form verbal noun, that is, a noun expressing the action of the underlying verb. In this use it is sometimes called a gerund. (see section 6.22) There are two formal syntactical obvious criteria for distinguishing these overlapping functions.<sup>15</sup>

- (a) The adjectival participle is a word which is derived from a verb and used as an element of the modifier of the nominal group.

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15) The traditional name for this overlap of function is syncretism.

- (b) A gerund is a word which is derived from a verb and used as a noun.

This distinction is clearly relevant to the analysis of the following two sentences:

kam kor<sup>a</sup>lorato gol  
work doing the boy went  
The working boy (servant) went away.

kam kori lorato gol  
work doing the boy went  
Having done the work, the boy went away.

(This is exhaustively discussed in the section on 'voice')

The following are two more examples of the adjectival participle:

khoa pani mok dia  
eating water me give  
Give me drinking water.

kali likha sithikhon gol  
yesterday writing the letter went  
The letter that was written yesterday has been posted.

#### 6.431 Participles with operators :<sup>16</sup>

The operators are closed-system verbs. They carry only

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16) Firth has used the term 'operator' in his "Synopsis". In mathematics, an operator is a symbol indicating that an operation (i.e. multiplication, addition, subtraction or division) is to be applied to a component; it is an indicator of the processes to be applied. In the example  $(4+5)(3-2)=9$ , the series of numbers is linked together by the arithmetical operators, +, x, and -. Similarly, in the example, He...like to ...walk, without linguistic operators no clear meaning is conveyed. But when the operators are added the meaning is clear (e.g. He would like to walk).

grammatical meaning, while the other components of the verb-sequence carry both grammatical meaning and lexical meaning. Since the operators are closed-system items, they are limited in number. Functionally they indicate sentence-type, voice, tense, and aspect. They have another much narrower function; they indicate the mood of the sentence. The operators in Assamese are as follows. The glosses given refer to the meaning of these forms when they occur as main verbs. As auxiliaries (operators) these meanings will be truncated to modify the main verb in various ways.

as	have
kor	do
thak	stay
nai	isn't
hoi	is
par	can, be able
dhor	catch
uth	rise
lag	come in contact with
por	fall

Participle + Operator

hi	kitap	porhi	asil
he	book	reading	was.

He was reading a book.

moi	hoa	nai
I	sleeping	isn't

I'm not sleeping.

teo	kora	hoi
he	doing	was

It's true that he did it.

hitai	hui	uthile
Sita	sleeping	rise

Sita is getting up.

The operators make up an extremely complex system, which we can analyse if we tackle it bit by bit, starting with the rules for order and the permitted combinations of elements.

6.432 The adverbial particle and the adjectival particle :

kamto kora hoa nai  
the work doing finished isn't  
The work isn't finished yet.

teo khai utha nai  
he eating rising isn't  
He has not finished eating.

hi porhi uthi pelai khalat lagise  
he reading rising finishing in the play came in contact  
After finishing his studying he started playing.

In a sequence of two or more than two participles,  
i precedes a.

Some of the participles carry the meaning of adverbial participles. Participles are combined with verbs to form combinations with meanings that are sometimes regular and obvious, but sometimes irregular.

lagi dhorise	was all right (touch + caught) <sup>nt</sup>
hoi poril	fit together (being + fell)
koi pelale	spoke out (saying + through)
mori gol	died away (dying + went)

## Present participle + tense auxiliary:

khai ase	is eating
kui porise	is sleeping
kori thoka nai	isn't doing
kori dia nai	hasn't done

The main syntactic features of these constructions may now be considered. The past (adverbial) participle exhibits exactly similar syntactic features to the variable attributive adjectives as does the verbal noun in its attributive use. This participle does not participate any concord. Its distribution is indicated by the verbal base. The transitivity and aspect of the finite form are marked finally. The following syntactic features are also to be noted.

kam kora manuh zon gol  
work doing man the has gone  
The workman has gone away.

kam kori manuh zon gol  
work having done man the went  
After finishing his work, the man went away.

boha loratoe kole  
sitting the boy said  
The boy who was sitting spoke.

loratoe bohi kole  
the boy having sat said  
Sitting (on the chair), the boy spoke.

moi bohi kolo  
I having sat said  
(When I was) sitting, I spoke.

\*moi boha kolo is ungrammatical, though moi bohi kolo is perfectly grammatical. The adjectival participle does not

occur with pronominal subjects since the object has no selection relation with the verb. The adjectival participle can occur with pronominal objects. Take the following example.

tat boha manuhzone mok kothato kole  
 there sitting man the me (something) said.  
 The man who is sitting over there told me about it.

tat bohi manuhzone mok kothato kole  
 there sitting the-man me the matter told  
 Sitting there, the man told me about it.

#### 6.5 The negator (N) :

The negator is that primary class of word which operates at N in the structure of the verbal group. Assamese has a complete negative conjugation for all verbs made by prefixing the particle n which is the exponent of the negator. The structure of negation is:

n + verb base + inflexion  
 nakhalo  
n + kha o

More precisely, n is followed by the first vowel of the following syllable. That is, the negative n particle includes an inherent vowel which is assimilated to the vowel of the first syllable of the verbal base so that we get a systematic vowel harmony. We can summarize this in morphophonemic terms.

If the verb base begins with a vowel, the negator is realized by prefixing n. If, however, the verb base begins with a consonant, the negator is realized by n followed by a



vowel which is the same as the vowel of the first syllable of the verb base.

<u>n</u> + verb base		<u>nv</u>	<u>cv</u>
ne+riba	don't leave	ni	ci
nu+thiba	don't climb	nu	cu
na+khaba	don't eat	na	ca

When the verb base begins with the vowel a, the negative particle n has two possible realizations. For example.

nazai	doesn't go	napai	doesn't get
nezai	(n+azai)	nepai	(n+apai)

#### 6.51 nai and nohai negators :

The sense of negation can also be expressed by using either nai or nohai. These two words are anomalous in the sense that they are not conjugated. It may be said that these words are used in the absence of the regular verb in the sentence. They can be regarded as special negative copulae.<sup>17</sup>

tat    moi    nai  
there I       not  
I am not there

tumi   tat    nai  
you   there   not  
You are not there

---

17) The affirmative of the suppletive form nai is ase which is conjugated for person.

moi	aso	I	stay
tumi	asa	you	stay
teo	ase	he	stays

təo tat nai  
 he there not  
 He's not there.

moi nohoi  
 I not-be  
 It's not me

tumi nohoi  
 you not-be  
 It's not you

təo nohoi  
 he not-be  
 It's not him

#### 6.52 The negative copulae :

As we have mentioned earlier,<sup>18</sup> equational clauses are characterized by the presence of the subject and complement without any element of predication. However, in the negative equational construction, a special negative copula is needed, either nai or nohai. In negative existential clauses also we need these negative copulae.

#### Affirmative

təo tat ase  
 he there is  
 He is there

ram mor bhai  
 Ram my brother  
 Ram is my brother

#### Negative

təo tat nai  
 he there isn't  
 He isn't there

ram mor bhai nohoi  
 Ram my brother isn't  
 Ram isn't my brother

---

18) The equational clause type (see section 3.6) has the following structure.

ram mor bhai  
 Ram my brother

Ram is my brother  
 A is A

eo hoise hembora  
 this is Hem Bora  
 This is Mr. Hem Bora

eo hem bora nohoi  
 This isn't Mr. Hem Bora

### 6.53 Negators and the past tense :

Although negation is often expressed by putting n before the finite verb or the non-finite verb, this is not always the case. The negator n precedes only simple present (habitual) and future. The proper negative for the past is different.

moi koro	moi nokoro
I do	I won't (do)

moi zam	moi nezam
I'll go	I won't go

But for the past, (note that in the negative, the negator precedes not the lexical verb (kora), but the operator (asilo)

moil korisilo	moi kora nasilo
I did	I doing not was
	I didn't do

Present continuous (note here that in the negative, the particle thoka is obligatory and that nai is formed by suppletion from n+ase).

hi goi ase	*hi nogoi ase	hi goi thoka nai
he going is	(unusual)	he going stay is not
He is going		He isn't going

Even in the negative progressive, however, thoka does

not occur with the verb as, 'stay'.

moi tat asilo	moi tat nasilo	moi tat thoka nasilo
I there was	I there wasn't	staying wasn't

#### 6.54 Negators and interrogators :

The negative marker n always precedes the verb if the verb is followed by the interrogative marker ne.

tumi zana	tumi nazanane <sup>19</sup>
you know	you not know (interrogative)
	Don't you know

tai ahibo	tai nahibone
She will come	Won't she come?

tumi nahisila	tumi nahahisila ne
you laughed	you not laughed (question)
	Didn't you laugh?

#### 6.55 nohoine in tag questions :

nohoine is another negator. Appearing finally in the sentence it functions as the exponent of a separate verbal group; it operates like the exponent of P in question-tags in English.

azi dhunia botor, nohoine?  
 today beautiful weather, isn't  
 It's beautiful out today, isn't it?

---

19) nazanane is a stylistic variant of nezanane. Similarly nehahisilone is a stylistic variant of nahahisilone.

tai ezoni dhunia soali asil, nohoine?  
 she one beautiful girl was, isn't it?  
 She was a beautiful girl, wasn't she?

kali tumi zaba nohoizano<sup>20</sup>  
 tomorrow you will go, isn't it  
 You'll go tomorrow, won't you?

#### 6.56 Prohibitive clause structure and negators :

In the prohibitive clause structure, the negator takes the lexical verb. We do not have space here to explore the implications of this.

eito kora mana  
 this doing not proper  
 To do this is not proper.

taloi zoa mana  
 there going not proper  
 Going there is prohibited.

#### 6.57 Operators and negators :

The negator n normally precedes the lexical verb. But if the lexical verb is followed by an operator forming a verbal sequence, the negator n precedes only the operator.

##### Affirmative

teo kamto kori asil  
 he the work doing was  
 He was doing the work.

##### Negative

teo kamto kori thoka nasil  
 he the work doing staying wasn't  
 He wasn't doing the work.

---

20) It should be pointed out that nohoizano is a stylistic variant of nohoine.



the negative system behaves in a different way, though it belongs to the same family as these others. This may be so because of the fact that Assamese is much more influenced by Tibeto-Burman languages, such as Bodo than any other Indo-Aryan language. We need to study the dialects and subdialects in the tribal areas of Assam to compare one negative system with another.

#### 6.6 The emphasizer (E) :

The emphasizer is that class of word which operates at E in the structure of the verbal group. It has three exponents, ei, he, and dei.

teo khalei	khoa he
he eat+e	eat+e
He finished up eating	Do eat
moi korimei	ahiba dei
I shall do+e	come+e
I shall certainly do	please do come

The emphasizers follow the elements they emphasize.

moi zoa nasilo he
I going wasn't + e
I certainly wasn't going
moi porhihe asilo
I reading+e was
I was only reading
hi bhat khaiei hule
he nice eating+e slept
He went to sleep as soon as he had eaten.

tak saboloihe zab khuziso  
 him to see+e to go I wanted  
 I wanted merely to go and see him.

The above examples show that we can shift the emphasizees. There is one restriction on the co-occurrence of the emphasizees. Two emphasizees cannot follow one after another. However, two emphasizees may co-occur in a verbal sequence in which they emphasize two different verbal elements.<sup>22</sup>

kamto koriei ahiba dei  
 the work doing+e come+e (pol.)  
 Please come as soon as you finish the work.

tso ahiei hulei  
 he coming+e sleeping+e  
 As soon as he came in he went right to bed.

Any part of any verbal sequence may also be emphasized by means of intonation. This can be covered by one general rule for the language as a whole. As this is the concern of phonology, we cannot go into the details here.

#### 6.7 Dubitative (D) :

The dubitative is that class of word which operates at D in the structure of the verbal group. Its exponents are neki, dekhon, zano, heno, kizani and hobola.

The function of this class of words is to convey two shades of meaning, that of doubt and hesitation and that of

---

22) We have two observations about the occurrence of the emphasizees. 1) dei always occurs with the verb with the second person suffix. 2) he does not occur with any other emphasizee in the verbal sequence. It is highly restricted in distribution.



contrary to expectation. So we have the following system of dubitatives based on both syntactic and semantic criteria.

dubitatives	-	doubt <u>zano</u> , <u>kizani</u> , <u>hobola</u>
		contrary to expectation <u>dekhon</u> , <u>heno</u>
		question expressing doubt <u>neki</u>

teo ahil hobola  
 he come + D  
 He may have come

tumi ahiba zano  
 you will come + D<sup>23</sup>  
 I wonder if you'll come

tekhet gol kizani  
 he went + D  
 He went away I suppose

tumi nogola dekhon  
 you didn't go + D  
 You didn't go, though I expected you to

gopale ahisil heno  
 Gopal came + D  
 To my surprise, Gopal came

---

23) Zano is used with second person and third person verbs. However, when it is used in the first person, it implies question:

moi zam zano  
 I shall go + D  
 Should I go?

moi zam neki  
 May I go?

6.8 The interrogative (I) :

The interrogative is that class of particle which operates at I in the structure of the verbal group. The I-particles are: ne, neki and zano.<sup>24</sup> These particles are bound morphemes. These interrogative formal markers are mutually exclusive.

- a.        tso sah khaine
  - b.        tso sah khaineki
  - c.        tso sah khaizano
- he    tea drinks+ IP    (IP - interrogative)

6.81 ne and neki particles :

There are some syntactic differences between the particles ne and neki.

tso sah khaine nakhai  
 he    tea eat+IP n+eat  
 Does he drink tea or not?

But

\*tso sah khaineki nakhai

The ne-interrogative can also occur when the subject is:

---

24) As we have mentioned earlier (Chapter IV), ne, neki and zano represent the polar interrogatives:

Mood -	[	indicative	-	[	polar -	[	zano	-	[	single	-	[	kon
		imperative				ne						kot	
		interrogative				neki						ki	
						non-polar				multiple		kone	

thematized whereas the neki-interrogative cannot:

teono sah khaine  
 he+emph tea eat+Int.  
 Is it he who drinks tea?

\*teono sah khaineki

But on the other hand, subject to some limitations, both ne and neki can occur with the emphatic element he attached to the S or O or both.

teohe sah khaine (S+he+O+V+ne)      Is he the only one  
 teohe sahhe khaine (S+he+O+he+V+ne)      who drinks tea?

\*teohe sah khaineki (S+he+O+V+neki)  
 teo sahhe khaineki (S+O+he+V+neki)

ne and neki always occur after the verb and are adjoined to it.

#### 6.9 Thematization of the verbal element :

The verb occurs in the sentence final position but for the sake of thematization (see Chapter IV) it, alone with the interrogative particles, can be placed in other positions.

teo sah khaine (S O V)  
 sah teo khaine (O S V)  
 khaine teo sah (V S O)

#### 6.91 Marginal questions :

The interrogative expressed by zano<sup>25</sup> is marginal and

---

25) Zano has been treated as a dubitative (cont'd next page)

tentative. It could be treated as a dubitative particle as well. Unlike ne and neki, zano does not necessarily occur after the verb and is not necessarily adjoined to the verb.

teo sah khai zano	
teo zano khai zano	I think he drinks tea.
teo sah zano khai	
*zano teo sah khai	

The position of zano indicates the point of reference of the question. Positionally zano cannot occur initially in the sentence.

#### 6.92 Tag questions :

There are two tag questions in Assamese. They are:

hoine = is it?

nohoine = isn't it?

The tags are added to statements, and they carry the sense of interrogation.

tumi kamto koriba,	hoine
you the work will do	is it
You'll do the work,	won't you?

---

(footnote cont'd from previous page) particle in section 6.7. Its function as D has been to convey the sense of doubt and hesitation. Syntactically zano as a dubitative particle is different from zano as an interrogative particle.

teo ahibo zano?	Will he come?
zano teo ahibo	He will come, I suppose.

tumi kamto koriba nohoine  
 you the work will do isn't it  
 You will do the work, won't you?

The tag refers to the whole of the statement that precedes it. Positionally, hoine may precede the statement although nohoine may not. In the first case a different meaning is expressed.

hoine tumi kamto koriba  
 Is it true that you'll do the work.

\*nohoine tumi kamto koriba

The Assamese tags are not comparable to English tags<sup>26</sup> in that hoine and nohoine can occur unaltered with all tenses and aspects.

teo mod khai hoine  
 he wine eat is it  
 He drinks, doesn't he?

teo mod khabo hoine  
 He'll drink, won't he?

teo mod khaisil hoine  
 He drank, didn't he?

---

26) A very common sentence pattern in spoken English or in informal written English is the tag-question or disjunctive question. The structure consists of a positive initial sentence followed by a negative tag or vice versa so that we have the following tag patterns:

positive-negative: He has gone home, hasn't he?

negative-positive: He hasn't gone home, has he?

Lastly, when we put hoine nohoine together preceding the statement, they have a nominalizing function.

teo: mod khaisil, hoine nohoi moi nazano  
he wine ate, is it isn't it I don't know  
I don't know whether he drank wine or not.



adjectives in a nominal group may be preceded by sub-modifiers (s/m) and there may be different degrees of submodification.

sotur lora  
e h  
clever boy

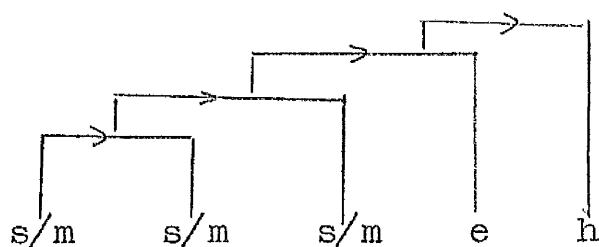
bor sotur lora  
s/m e h  
very clever boy

Sub-modifiers belonging to this class are:

oti-very  
bor-very much  
otibo-very much  
bhojanok-terribly much  
khub, otjonto-very much indeed

khub oti besi moromial soali  
s/m s/m s/m e h  
very much very much kind hearted girl  
a very very kind hearted girl

Here khub modifies oti, khub oti modifies besi, khub oti besi modifies moromial, and finally khub oti besi moromial modifies soali,



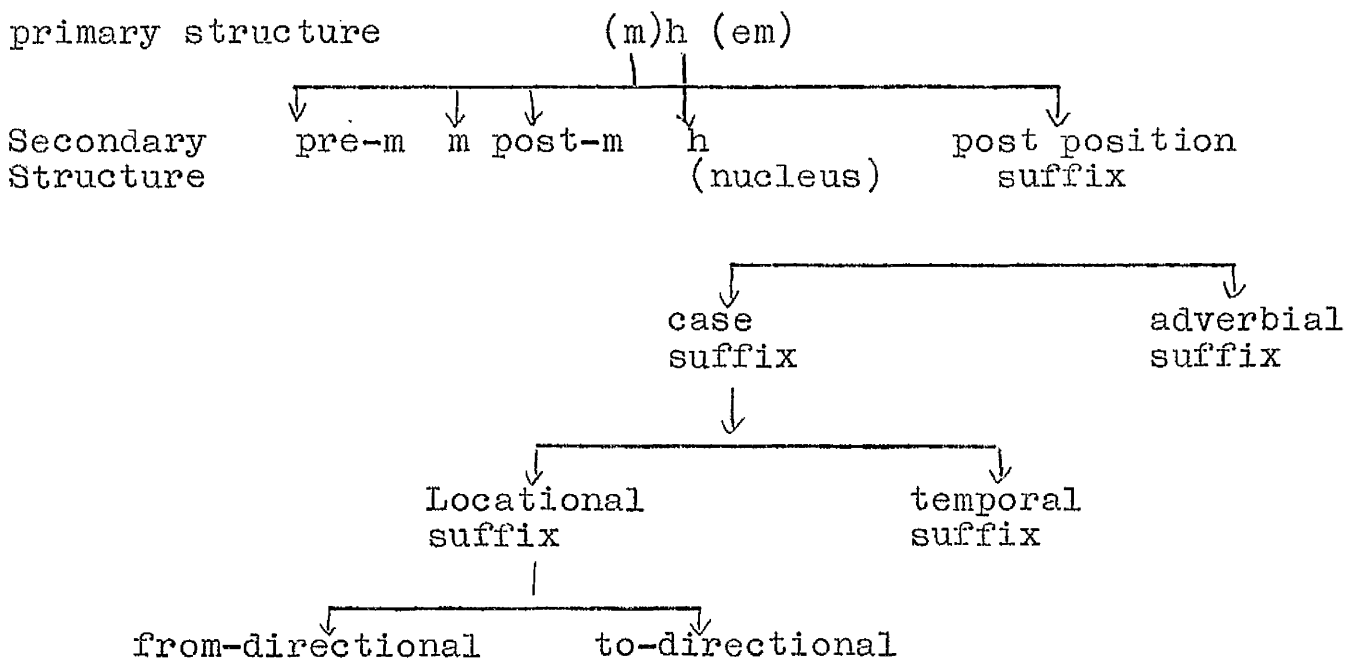


We might ask, what evidence do we have that khub modifies oti and that they are not co-ordinate to the head soali? We have no other linguistic evidence than the restriction on co-occurrence within the internal structure of the group. We cannot say, for example,

oti khub besi moromial soali<sup>2</sup>  
 besi oti khub moromial soali

## 7.21 The primary elements of adverbial group structure

The primary elements of adverbial group structure may be said to be m (modifier), h (head) and em (emphasizer). These elements are expounded by different primary classes of the unit word. Classes of words which function in the group base are nuclear word classes (h) and satellite word classes (m and em) m is prenuclear, em is usually postnuclear. The general formula of the structure of the group is



m and em are optional, they may or may not be present. h is obligatory. m and h are in fixed sequence; em is not sequence-bound. That is to say, it can occur after m or after h, or after both; but m cannot succeed h and h cannot precede m. Either m or h can be group initiator, but em cannot be group initiator. The possible sequences are shown in the following formula.

(m) (em) h (em)

#### 7.22 Possible combinations of primary elements

<u>No. of elements</u>	<u>structure</u>	<u>example</u>
one	<u>h</u>	akou again  hodai always  nitou daily  obosje truly, of course  mathon only

---

2. (See previous page). "We say 'a large black and white hunting dog' .... How is the speaker of the radically different mother tongue supposed to know that he cannot say 'hunting white and black large a dog'? -- Benjamin Lee Whorf.

<u>No. of elements</u>	<u>structure</u>	<u>example</u>
two	<u>mh</u>	bor lahekoi m h very slowly
		khub drirhotare m h very tenaciously
		otonto khorkoi m h very quickly
	<u>h em</u>	azi ei h em right, today
		totalik ei h em immediately
		ebar he h em only once
three	<u>m h em</u>	kailoi he h em only tomorrow
		hei pine i m h em that way emphatic that way
		ei karone i m h em this reason emphatic for this reason only
		khub lahekoi ei m h em very slowly emphatic very slowly indeed

m em h

hei ei karone  
m em h  
that emphatic reason  
only for that reason.

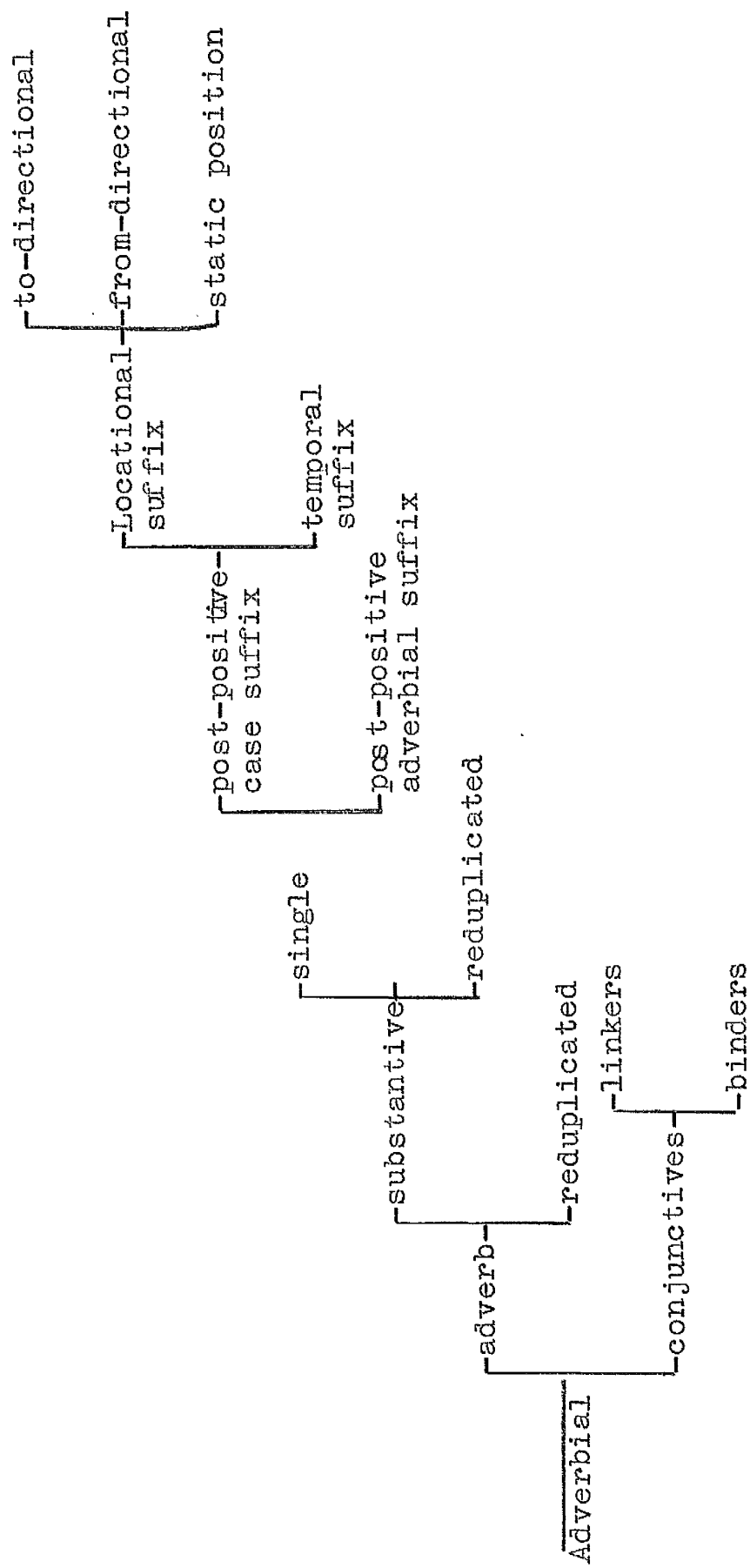
khub ei bhalkoi  
m em h  
very empty good  
extremely well.

### 7.3 The h-element

h is that primary element of the adverbial group structure which is expounded by the primary class adverbial of the unit word. We may define adverbial as that class of word which operates as head of an adverbial group. That is to say we define h as that primary element which can expound the simple (i.e., one-element) structure of the adverbial group.

#### 7.31 Subdivisions of the adverbials operating at h

By taking a step in delicacy, we may subdivide the adverbials into adverbs and conjunctives.



### 7.311 Syntactic distinction between adverbs and conjunctives

The main distinction between adverbs and conjunctives is that the former are sometimes formed with post-positions (koi, loi, re, e, pora, t, etc.) but the latter are never so formed.

### 7.312 Examples of adverbs

#### group rank

lahe koi-quietly  
khorkoi-quickly  
dhirekoi-slowly

znekoi-thus  
zenekoi-as  
tenekoi-so  
kaloi-for whom

koloi-where  
taloi-there  
zotonere-with case  
porisromere-labori-  
ously

okole-alone  
krome-gradually  
nisoje-certainly

#### clause rank

hi lahe koi kothato mok kole  
he slowly the word me said  
He quitely told me the matter.

tξo zenekoi kore moio tξn{koi koro  
he as does I also so do  
I do as he does

ami kailoi taloi zam  
we tomorrow there shall go  
We shall go there tomorrow.

hitai okole bilaloi gol  
Sita also to England has gone  
Sita has gone to England alone.

### 7.313 Examples of conjunctives

zodi-if  
aru-and  
naiba-otherwise

zodi tξo ahe moi zam  
if he comes I shall go  
I will go if he comes.

ba-or  
 kintu-but  
 tothapi-yet  
 kizani-perhaps

kintu hi nahil zodio moi koisilo  
 but he didn't come although I said  
 He didn't come though I asked him to.

tɛo-yet  
 ʒtɛk -therefore

tai ahibo, ʒtɛke ami hazu hoa usit  
 she will come therefore we prepared  
 get should  
 Since she is coming, we should  
 get prepared.

### 7.32 Substantives

The syntactic difference between substantives and pro-adverbs is that the substantives may be modified but pro-adverbs may not.

Substantives are that secondary class of adverbs which can occur with pre-head modifiers and are formed by post positions.

#### group rank

#### clause rank

khor koi  
 h pp 4  
 quickly

zonton koi  
 h pp  
 carefully

---

4. pp stands for post position, such as t, a, koi, etc.

group rankclause rank

bor khor koi  
 m h pp  
 very quickly

hi bor khorkoi dourise  
 he very quickly running  
 He is running very quickly.

khub Zotono koi  
 m h pp  
 very carefully

tɕkhɕtɕ ghorto khub zontonkoi rakhise  
 he the house vȃry carefully keep  
 He keeps the house very neat.

tarei pisot  
 m h pp  
 of that after  
 after that

tarei pisot moi golo  
 of that em back+ps I went  
 After that I went away.

nisei horoh koi  
 little much pp  
 a little more

gopale nisei horokoi bhat khale  
 Gopal little more rice has eaten  
 Gopal has eaten just a little more  
 rice.

oti dhuniakoi  
 m h pp  
 very beautifully

tai sulitari oti dhuniakoi rakhe  
 she hair very beautiful keeps  
 She keeps her hair very beautiful.

### 7.321 Reduplication of substantives<sup>5</sup>

A few substantive adverbs occur only reduplicated or reiterated. When substantives are reduplicated adverbially, the post-position -e is used.

---

5. Reduplication in Assamese deserved exhaustive treatment. Since reduplication is basically a phonological phenomenon rather than a grammatical one, we have mentioned it only when it serves a grammatical purpose; that is to say, when it has the semantic meaning of intensity and plurality. Reduplication is employed with verbs to express continuous action. Adjectives are reduplicated to express emphasis and intensity.



group rankclause rank

maze maze  
often

moi maze maze ghoroloi zao  
I often to home go  
I go home very often.

dine dine  
daily

moi dine dine gakhir khao  
I daily milk eat  
I take milk daily.

bare bare  
many times

mok bare bare ahiboloi koise  
~~he~~ me many times to come said  
He has asked me to come ~~several times~~.

dhire dhire  
slowly

~~bota~~ dhire dhire bolise  
wind slowly is blowing  
the wind is blowing slowly

ghone ghone  
very often

moi ghone ghone t<sup>to</sup> lokor thai  
loi zao  
I very often to their place go  
I go to them very often.

dexe dexe  
from country to  
country

ghandhir zoxosja dexe dexe bopisi  
of Gandhi fame country country  
spread  
Gandhi's fame spread from country  
to country.

bosore bosore  
yearly

ami taloi bosore bosore zao.  
we there every year go  
We go there every year.

lahe lahe  
slowly

burhizonie lahe lahe khoz karhise  
The old woman is slowly walking  
The old woman is walking slowly.

Note that in these cases, the substantive does not occur unreduplicated with e.

It seems that the Assamese are very fond of reduplication. It is a marked feature of words in Assamese. Nouns, verbs, and adverbs (substantives) may all be repeated to denote repetition, distribution, variety, intensity, or continuance.

As far as adverbs are concerned, words are reduplicated in two ways;

I. By repetition of the same word e.g.

group rank

lahe lahe  
slowly

dhire dhire  
steadily

mone mone  
silently

clause rank

kastoe lahe lahe goisil  
the tortoise slowly went  
The tortoise went away slowly.

t&kh&t& dhire dhire kothato tak kole  
he steadily the word him said  
He spoke to him steadily.

lorabilake mone mone kitap porhise  
the boys silently books are reading  
The boys are silently reading books.

III By addition of a rhyming or jingling word:

thik thakoi  
properly

soalizonie bostue bilak thik thakoi  
the girl the things properly kept  
The girl keeps things in order.

amon zimonkoi  
quietly, without  
interest

loratoe amon zimonkoi bohi ase  
the boy quietly is sitting  
The boy is sitting quietly.

bhale kukhole  
getting on well

ami bhale kukhole aso.  
we well stay  
We are getting on well.

khore dhorkoi  
quickly

khore dhorkei kamto koro  
quickly the work do  
Do the job quickly.

### 7.33 Traditional adverbs

The following items have been traditionally treated as adverbs on semantic grounds.

bhitorot-within	bodoli-instead of
tolot-below	onuhare-according to
agot-in front of	logot-with
pasot-behind	osorot-near
sariophale-around	karon-for
oporot-above	nisina-like
bahirost-outside	mazot-among
bine-without	kaxot-by the side of

### 7.34 No preposition in Assamese

There are no prepositions in Assamese. Their place is supplied by nouns in the locative case following another noun in the genitive. For example,

manuhzonor logot	hi manuhzonor logot gol
man (gen.) company	he man (gen.) company (loc.) went.
(loc.) with the	He went away with the man.
man	

These forms have been traditionally viewed as adverbs on semantic grounds. We on the other hand consider them adverbs on purely formal grounds. Like other adverbs they can be preceded by modifiers but not

suffixed by further pospositions. Like other adverbs they are not inflected for number gender or grade.

For example, *tolot* (under) is (though considered a preposition in traditional grammar) formed with the post-position (see page ). It is not functionally different from other adverbs. It can be preceded by a modifier as in the following examples.

6

$d^p g$ gosor <i>tolot</i> m h tree (gen.) bottom (loc.)	hi gosor <i>tolot bohise</i> he tree (gen.) bottom (loc.) sit He is sitting under the tree.
--	---

We would analyse the following in a similar way.

ghoror agot  $d^p g$ m h house (gent.) front (loc.)	ghoror agot zopa gos ase  house (gen.) front (loc. (class.)) tree is There is a tree in front of the house.
gaor kaxot $d^p g$ m h village (gen.) side (loc.) beside the village	gaor kaxot khon habi asil village (gen.) side (loc.) (class.) forest was There was a village near the forest.
nodir oporot $d^p g$ m h river (gen.) top (loc.) over the river	gaor manuhe nodir oporot dolon khon dise village (gen.) river (gen.) top (loc.) bridge (class.) build The villagers built a bridge over the river.

---

6.  $d^p g$  stands for genetival deictic. See Chapter V, p. 215.

It may be noted here that these adverbials are normally preceded either by  $_{dp}^g$  or by  $_{dp}^p$  (that is, possessive diectic, genitival or personal possessive).

#### 7.341 Postposition

One of the features of Assamese is the predominance of the noun-class. Postpositive suffixes are capable of forming adverbial constructions with noun classes. These constructions may be called directive constructions in that its immediate constituents can be viewed as director plus axis.

mɛzkhonor	oporot	kitapkhon	mɛzkhonor	oporot	ase
of the table	on the	the book	table (gen.)	top (loc.)	
top		is			
on the top of the		The book is on the table.			
table					

Here -t, (or -ot following closed syllables), the postpositive locative case ending, opor (top), is the axis. A postposition thus plays a double function; it stands in construction with its axis, and also shows the relationship of the whole construction to the rest of the sentence. Postpositive suffixes are the syntactic markers of temporal and locative adverbials.

#### 7.342 Locative adverbials

Locative adverbials indicate place.

There are locative suffixes which function as syntactic markers in the locative adverbial group.

The locative adverbial group can be subdivided as follows:

locative adverbial	{	from directional	(genitive case + postpositive
		to-directional	suffix <u>pora</u> )
		static position	(postpositive suffix <u>loi</u> ) (post positive suffix <u>t</u> )

(gen.) + pora:    moi bilatorpora ahilo  
                          I England (gen.) from have come  
                          I have come from England.

                         k xobe londonor pora gol  
                          keshab London (gen.) from has gone  
                          Keshab has left from London.

loi:            kali tŋo gauhati loi gol  
                          yesterday he Gauhati to went  
                          He went to Gauhati yesterday.

                         uxai oxom oloi ahibo  
                          Usha Assam to will come  
                          Usha will come to Assam.

t:              hit kalot londnot boroph pore  
                          winter season (loc.) London (loc.)  
                          snow falls  
                          It snows in London in the winter.

                         kali moi ghorot asilo  
                          yesterday I home (loc.) was  
                          I was at home yesterday.

---

7. Note that of these postpositions, pora occurs after the genitive case postposition -r, the others are simply added to the noun stem with appropriate morphophonem alterations.

7.343 Temporal adverbials

Temporal adverbials indicate time. There are two types of these.

temporal adverbials-	┌	-Unaffixed temporals
		-Suffixed temporals

- 1) Unaffixed temporals -azi, kali duporia,  
today, yesterday, in the noon
- 2) Suffixed temporal adverbials -dinot, kailoi, hombare  
by day, tomorrow, on Monday.  
(use the suffixed -t, -loi, and e)

azi abeli duibozat tɕo ahibo  
(unaffixed)(unaffixed) (suffix -t)  
today afternoon two o'clock he will come  
He'll come today at two o'clock in the afternoon.

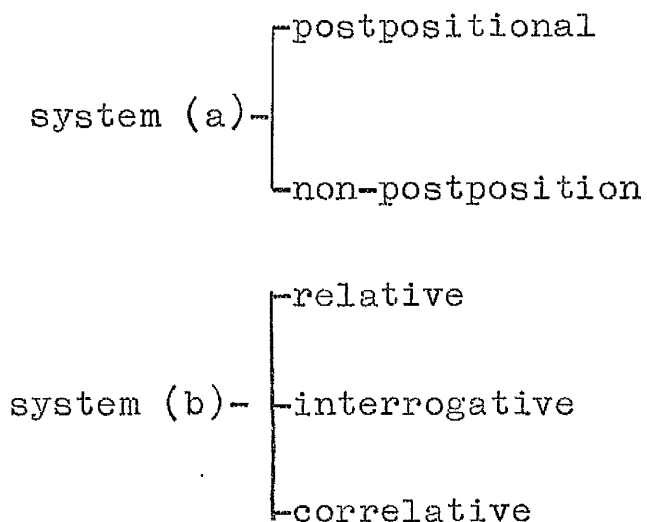
zoa tini disember hukrobare ratipua ath bozat  
mor deuta dhukai (suffixed -t) (unaffixed) (suffixed t)  
last 3 December Friday (loc.) morning(loc.) 8 clock (loc.)  
my father died.  
My father died on Friday morning, last December  
the third, at 8 o'clock.

7.344 The pro-adverbs

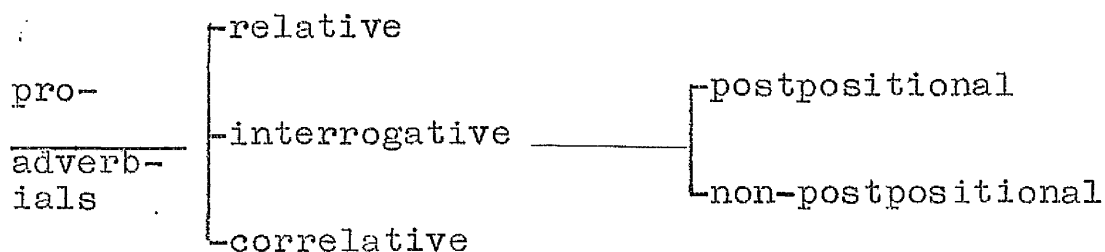
The pro-adverbs are that secondary class of adverbs which may not be preceded by submodifiers. The following collocations do not occur.

s/m	*oti kene	s/m	pro-adverbs (very, how)
	*bor zenekoi	s/m	pro-adverb (very in whatever)
	*khub zot	s/m	pro-adverbs (very much where)
	*otjonto zetia	s/m	pro-adverbs (terribly when)
	*aru zene	s/m	pro-adverbs (more how)

Pro-adverbs enter simultaneously into two different systems. The systems are interlinked.



Combining the two systems we have:





## Examples:

## I. Post-positional relatives

zenekoi (which way +  
manner suffix)  
which every way

zenekoi amsilɬ tɛnekoi  
zoa  
which way came that way  
go  
Go the same way you came

zetaitloi (when (loc.)  
until

zetialoi hi nahe tɛtialoi  
moi thakimæi  
until he not come there (loc.)  
stay  
I'll stay till he comes.

## II. Non-postpositional relatives

zetia  
when

zetia ma ahibo tetia moi  
kham  
when mother will come then  
I eat  
I will eat when my mother  
comes.

zot<sup>8</sup>  
where

kolomdal zot asil tate thoa  
pencil the where was there  
put  
Put the pencil back where  
it was.

---

8. Zot seems to have a postpositive suffix t. But since there is no word zo in the language, the following structure is impossible.

\*zo+koi (stem+postpositive suffix)  
whereas we can have the word structure,  
zene+koi (stem+postpositive suffix)

We therefore consider the similarity of the final t zot to the locative suffix -t to be merely coincidental

## III. Postpositional interrogative.

kenekoi	orunai kamto kenekoi hex korile
how	Aruna the work how finish did
	How did Aruna finish the job?

koloi	mridula koloi gol
where	Mridula where gone
	Where has Mridula gone?

ketiakoi	tɕo ketiakoi ahibo
when	he when will come
	When will he come?

## IV. Non-postpositional interrogative

ketia	mor ghoroloi tumi ketia ahiba
when	my house (loc.) you when will come
	When are you coming to my house?

keni	sakorto keni gol
which way/where	the servant where gone
	Where has the servant gone?

kot	hilto kot ase
where	stone the where stays
	Where is the stone?

## V. Postpositional correlative

tenekoi	zenekoi porhiba, tenkoi phol paba
so/that way	as read get, so fruit get
	You will get results according to
	how much you study.

toloi	zoloi khusi toloi zoa
there	where pleasure there go
	Go wherever you like.

tetialoi	zetialoi ṭo nahe tetialoi tumi
till then	thakiba
	Until he come (reg.) till then you
	stay
	You stay on till he comes.

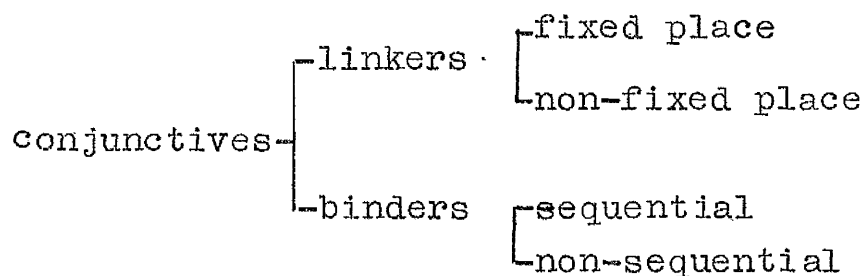
#### VI. Non-postpositional correlative.

tetia	tetia moi ṭok kolo
then	then I him said
	Then I told him.

tat	tat ki hoise
there	there what happens
	What is happening there?

### 7.4 Conjunctives

The conjunctive is that secondary class of adverbials which can not be formed by postpositions and cannot be preceded by modifiers. We subdivide conjunctives into linkers and binders, according to their functions.



7.41 The linkers

The linkers may be grouped into the following classes depending on whether they operate in adverbial groups at fixed places in clause structure or not.

I. Fixed place linkers<sup>9</sup>

aru )  
ebon) and

koruna ialoi ahisil aru mok  
dekha korisil  
Karuna here (loc.) came and me  
seeing did  
Karuna came here and saw me.

ba )  
naiba ) or  
orthoba)

t̥ɕo nize ahibo ba batori  
pothiabo  
He himself come or message send  
He will come himself or send a  
message.

kintu ) but  
porontu)

t̥ɕo dukhia kintu hot  
he poor but honest  
He is poor but he is honest.

tenehole )  
tetiahole ) so  
tente )

tumi tenehole zoa goi  
you so go away  
You better go away.  
So go away.

zihetu )  
zihetuke ) since

zihetu tumi naha moi nazao  
since you don't come I don't go  
Since you aren't coming, I  
won't go.

heihetuke )  
heinimitte ) there-  
gteke ) fore

amar manuhe bhal ahar khabo napai,  
heihetuki t olok nihokotia.  
our people good food to eat do  
not get, therefore they thin.  
Because our people can't get good  
food to eat, they are not  
healthy.

---

9. We have already discussed these unker Linkage,  
Chapter III.

karon	hi kandise karon tar mak azi
because	dhukal
	he is crying because his mother
	today has died
	He is crying because his mother
	died today.

## II. non-fixed place linkers

The following linkers can occur in any position in the clause without any semantic difference.

kizani	t̥so kizani ahibo
perhaps	t̥so ahibo kizani
	kizani t o ahibo
	perhaps he will come
zano	moi zano ahim
after all	moi ahim zano
	*zano moi ahim
	after all I shall come
	Should I come after all?
hombhob <sup>10</sup>	hombhob ami nazam
perhaps	ami hambhob nazam
	ami nazam hambhob
	perhaps we shall not go
bodhhoi	bodhhoi tai gol
I suppose	tai bodhhoi gol
	tai gol bodhhoi
	she went I suppose
	I suppose she went away.

---

10. hombhob is possibly a doubtful entry here hombhob can be preceded by modifiers, e.g. khub hambhob "most probable", is perfect Assamese. Hambhob is not however formed by suffixation.

7.42 The Binders

The binders may be grouped into the following classes depending on whether they can operate in adverbial groups in sequential dependent clauses or not. The binders are conjunctive adverbs which stand between equivalent elements of structure, belonging to the same class of words, groups, clauses or even sentences. They function as signs that the structures they link are functioning as equals. At the clause level the clauses are sequentially related.

## I. Sequential binders

zen  
so that

mok tɕo onurodh korile zen  
moi aho  
me he requested that I come  
He asked me to come.

ze  
that

moi zamo Ram ze hot  
I know Ram that honest  
I know that Ram is honest.

bole  
(hearsay)

tumi koisa bole moi misolia  
You said from hearsay that I  
liar  
You said from hearsay that  
I am a liar.

heno  
(by supposition)

moi zano tai heno taloi zabo  
I know she there go by  
supposition.  
I suppose she will go there.

zodio  
although

hi anak hohai nokore zodio hi  
sohoki  
he others help doesn't although  
he rich  
Although he is rich he doesn't  
help others.

## II. Non-sequential binders

zodi if	zodi botor b a hoi moi nazao if weather bad becomes I shall not go I won't go if the weather becomes bad.
karon because	tlok hokoloe bhal pai, karon tlo hot him all good get because he honest Everybody likes him because he is honest.
naiba or	tlo naiba moi ahim He or I will come.
ba or	mor bhaitok ba bhonizonik pothiam my brother or sister shall send I will send my brother or sister.

We should make the distinction clear between the sequentials and non-sequentials:

I. Both sequentials and non-sequentials can initiate a dependent clause. The sequential dependent clause can be further expanded by introducing more sequential particles.

II. The sequentials enter into the system of mood which introduces the systems of tense and aspect.<sup>11</sup>

---

11. We have fully discussed the system of mood on pp.

III. The non-sequentials alone can select from the system of conditional and relative clauses. The conditionals and the relatives are mutually exclusive. The conditionals are expounded by non-sequential binders such as zodi, karon etc. The relatives are expounded by the z-words and sometimes by the k-words.<sup>12</sup> These words may be called sentence modifiers just as non-sequential particles may be called sentence adverbs.

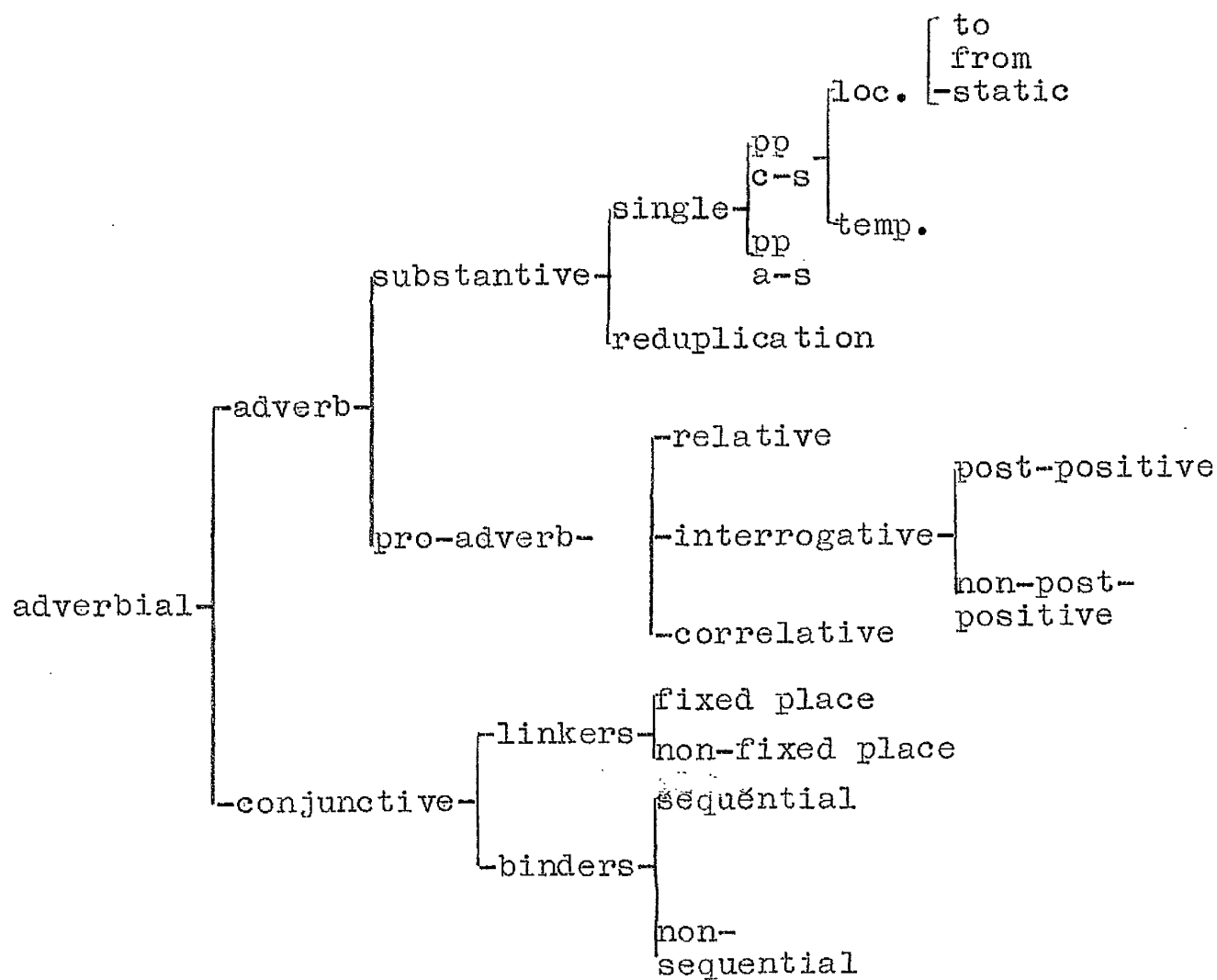
The syntax of Assamese is arrived at not so much by collocation as by congruence. Assamese does not suffer from rigidity of word order. But this is applicable only to the elements at the primary delicacy. The internal structure of each primary element is fairly rigid. The distribution of the sequential particles and the non-sequential particles are conditioned by the environment of the dependent clause. They can be either inter-sentential or intra-sentential. Whatever their positions may be in the syntactic arrangement, these particles take no affixes, are not expandable and are not replaceable. These non-expandable sequential particles can be termed syntactic markers and be treated as syntagmatic features.<sup>13</sup>

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12. For these terms see p. 95 fn 32.

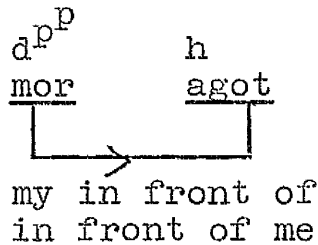
13. The insight which has been used to give a name to the 'syntagmatic' school of grammar is one which derives from Firth's separation of elements from syntagmatic features. This has hitherto been given more prominence in phonological studies. John Bendor-Samuel has developed a theory known as structure-function. Bendor-Samuel has made use of syntagmatic features in his A Structure-Function Description of Terena Phrases and has developed it further in his later articles. The important thing to note here is that there are syntagmatic features which are not elements but act as signals of relationships between elements. The sequentials are syntagmatic features.



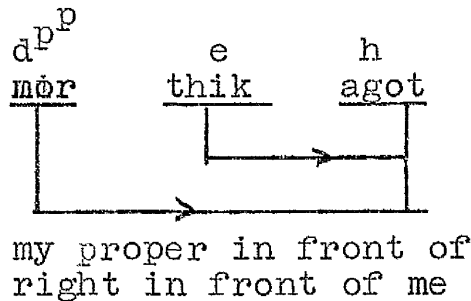
7.43 The adverbial diagram

7.5 The modifier m

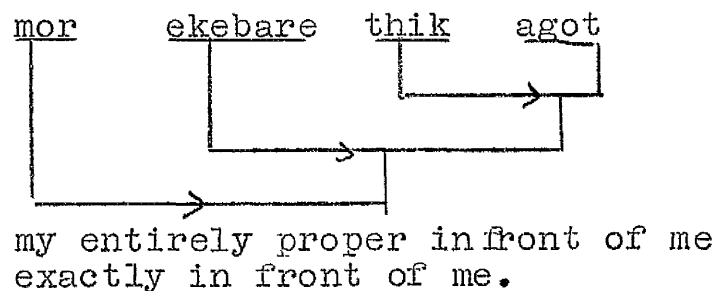
We have already described the modifier and its exponents in our description of the nominal group. We have also seen how an exponent of m may be repeated in depth, or may be split into more delicate constituents. We will now look at a few examples of modifiers operating in adverbial group structure.

I. Non-rankshifted m

structure:  $d^{p^p} \quad h$   
m h



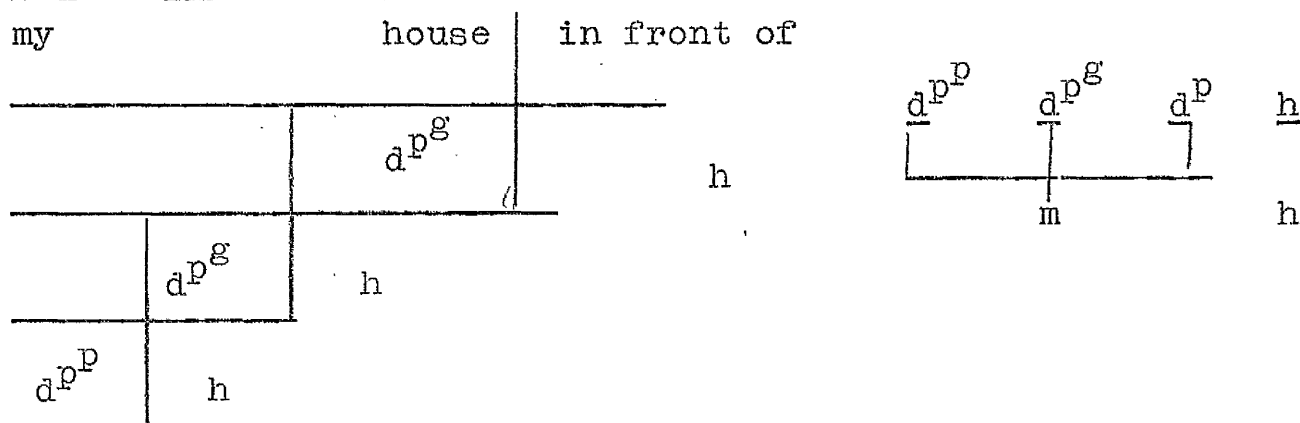
structure:  $d^{p^p} \quad e \quad h$   
m h



structure:  $d^{p^p} \quad s/m \quad e \quad h$   
m h

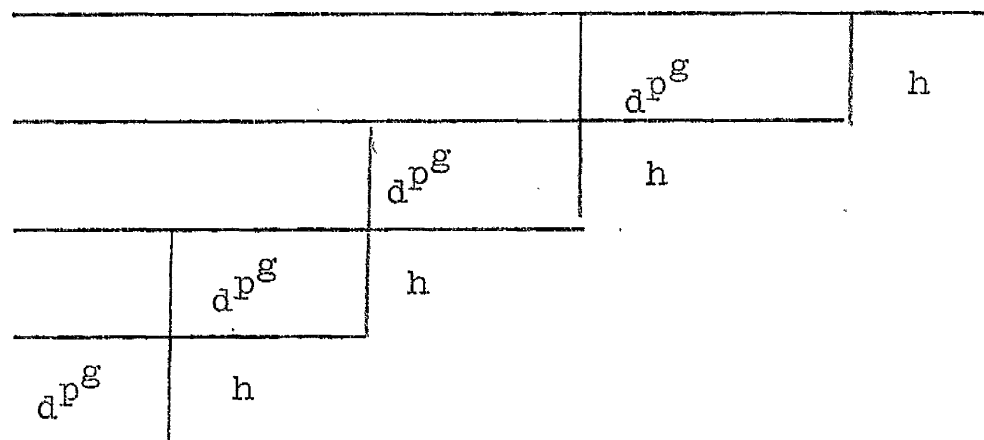
II. Rankshifted m

$d^{p^p}$        $d^{p^g}$        $d^{p^g}$       h      13  
mor      kokair      goror      agot      structure:  
 my      house      in front of



my of elder brother of house in front  
 in front of the house of my elder brother

gharor<sup>14</sup>    osoror    nodkhonor    delonkhonor    oporot



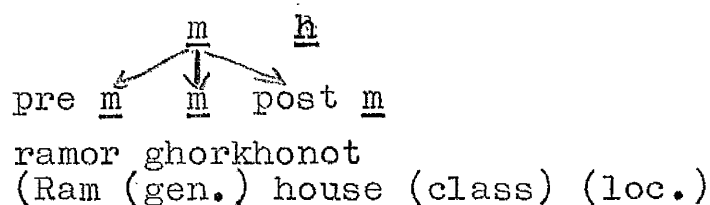
of the house of near of the river of the bridge on  
 the top  
 on the bridge over the river near the house

13. Each  $d^{p^g}$  carries the potentiality of being h, hence  
 the rankshift/This kind of rankshift  
 is level skipping rather than backlooping,  
 to use the tagmemic terminology.

14. See Chapter 5.

7.51 Pre-modifier and post-modifier

As we have seen above, the modifier (m) word class comprises those words which only occur as satellites of the nucleus (h) of the adverbial group. Modifiers may be subdivided into classes on the basis of function. Premodifiers precede the modifier and post-modifiers succeed the modifiers. Premodifiers, modifiers and postmodifiers all precede the nucleus h.



hou ram dokanir ghor khonot  
prem m postm h  
 that Ram shop keeper (gen) house (class) (loc.)  
 In that house of the shop keeper, Ram's.

7.6 The emphasizer em

We have already examined the operation of the emphasizer in our description of the nominal group. The same formal items operate as emphasizers in adverbial group structure.

There are two exponents of em ei and he.

hosakoi ei	onjoili hosakoiei dhunia
<u>h</u> <u>em</u>	Anjali truly beautiful
truly	Anjali is really beautiful.
hodaiei	hi hodaiei sijor bakhor kore
<u>h</u> <u>em</u>	he always shouting does
always	He is always shouting.
kalihe	ami kalihe sohoroloi goisilo
<u>h</u> <u>em</u>	we only yesterday to town went.
only yesterday	We went to town only yesterday.
zodihe	zodhihe tumi aha, moi zam baru
<u>h</u> <u>em</u>	only if you come I shall go possibly
if only	Only if you come will I possibly go.

#### 7.61 The maximum expansion in terms of em

The adverbial group is expandable in terms of em as it is expandable in terms of m and h. Unlike m which can be split into more delicate subdivisions, em can occur twice, once preceeding m and the other one succeeding h.

morhe ghorot  
m em house (loc.)  
 in my house

morei ghorotei  
 in my house only<sup>15</sup>  
morhe gorothe but \*morhe ghorotei

The composite structure is m h

em

---

15. When em occurs twice in the same expression, it must be expounded by the same element each time.

## Chapter VIII

8.1 THE LAYOUT OF THE TEXTS

This thesis is not altogether theory-orientated. It is not that we have designed the materials for a particular framework of theory. The thesis is, in fact, data-orientated in that we have designed a theory from the materials which have been presented throughout the body of the thesis.

In this Chapter three more texts are presented in order to highlight the interrelationships of the various grammatical units. The sentences of the texts are transcribed in reading transcription which is followed by a word-for-word translation. At the end of each text, an idiomatic translation in consecutive English of narrative style is included. Text III has been presented in terms of grammatical categories. Its analysis is set out in Section 8.3.

The abbreviations employed are the same as those used in the previous Chapters, and are listed in the table at the end of the study.

8.2. The Texts

The three texts presented in this chapter form part of the corpus of material on which is based the body of the thesis. They show a wide variety of structures with different variety of word classes of Assamese.

TEXT Igaor hatkhon

(the village market)

1. adin ratipua moi hui uthilo / 2. hat mukh dhulo aru  
 one day morning I sleeping got up hand face wash and  
 ekap sah khalo / 3. tar pisot phuriboloi olai golo /  
 one cup tea eat after that to walk out went  
 4. olop pisot gaor hat khon palo / 5. hatot bohut manuh  
 a while after of the village market arrived in the market  
 dakhilo /  
 many people I saw  
 6. mor bondh keshabok log palo / 7. kexobor ghor mor  
 my friend keshb also met keshab of house my  
 8. hatot manuhbilakhe kina besa korisil/  
 village itself market in people buying selling did.  
 9. manuhbilak dukhia / 10. hei karone teoloke dami bostu  
 people poor that reason for they precious things  
 kinibo noare / 11. teelokor oboise ataibilak manuh  
 to buy to unable of them of course all people  
 hot nohoi / 12. moi keitaman bostu kiniboloi itsa korilo /  
 people honest neg. I a few things to buy wish did  
 13. kintu mor hatot besi poisa nasil / 14. hei karone  
 but my hand in much money was not that reason  
 eta danor mas, mor bhoni zonir karone dukhon kitap aru  
 for one big fish my young sister reason for two books and  
 tini dal kolom kinilo / 15. tar pisot ghoroloi ahilo /  
 three wooden pencils bought I after that house to return  
 I came

16. moi bhoza mas khai bhal pao / 17. hei karone mai  
 I fried fish eating good get that reason for my mother  
 masto mor karone bhazilo / 18. tar pisot moi bhat kalo  
 fish me reason for fried after that I rice ate  
 aru hui porilo /  
 and sleeping fell.

### THE VILLAGE MARKET

One morning I got up, washed my hands and face and had a cup of tea. Then I went out for a walk. After a while I arrived at the village market. In the market I saw many people. I also met my friend keshab. Keshab's house is in my village. In the market people were buying and selling. The people are poor, and therefore they cannot buy precious things. Not all of them are honest, of course. I wanted to buy a few things, but I hadn't much money. Because of that, I bought one big fish, and two books and three pencils for my younger sister. Then I came back home. I like eating fried fish, so my mother fried the fish for me. After that I ate rice and fell asleep.

### TEXT II

eta hoha aru eta kasor lor

(A race between a hare and tortoise)

1. edin eta hoha aru kaso:r haikhat hol / 2. kastoe  
 One day one hare and tortoise-of meeting happened tortoise-  
 the



besi loribo noare karone hoatoe tak bidrup-kori kole  
much to-run not-is-able therefore hare the him insult  
doing said

kihe dholong-dhopong koi koloi zao / 3. kotha axar huni  
hallo clumsily doing where go comment the hearing  
kasor monot bor dukh lagil / 4. hi monote tar protihod  
tortoise of mind in very sorrow touched he mind in emph.  
its revenge

loboloi sthir korile / 5. aru kole zodio tumi begai loribo  
taking steady did and said although you quickly to-run  
para tothapi moi tomak dourot porasto koriho paro /  
be able yet I you race in defeat to do am able /

6. hohatoe hai utor dile tenehole honkale p  
hare the laughing reply gave therefore happened immediately  
porikha kora houk / 7. edin dour arambho houk /

test doing let be / one day race beginning happened

8. kastoe lahe-lahe zopiai-zopiai zaboloi dhorile /  
tortoise the slowly jumpingly to go caught /

9. hohai eke lore bohu dur palegoi / 10. tar pisot  
hare the one emph. run much distance reached / after that  
hohatoe bhabile ze heikhini paboloi kasor bohut

hare the thought that this to get tortoise of much  
homoi lagibo / 11. hohatoe eikhinite olop zironi

time touched hare the that time emph. little rest

loboloi mon korile / 12. hi ezopa gosor sat zironi  
to take mind did / he one tree of shadow rest

lole / 13. tar gat sesa botah lagi tuponi ahil /  
took his body in cold wind touching sleep came

14. kastoe ekerahae goi asil / 15. hi lahe lahe goi  
tortoise the continuously going stayed he slowly doing

nirdisto thai pale aru tate zironi lole / 16. tar pisot  
fixed place reached and there rest took / after that

hohai har pai uthi begain lor dile / 17. hi goi  
 hare the awake getting rising quickly run gave he going  
 dekhile ze kastoe nirdisto thait roi ase /  
 saw that tortoise the fixed place in waiting stays.  
 18. hohatoo bor laiz pale /  
 hare the very shame got

### A RACE BETWEEN A HARE AND TORTOISE

One day a hare met a tortoise. Because the tortoise couldn't move quickly the hare rudely said, "Hallo, where are you going so clumsily?". Hearing the comment the tortoise was very much hurt. He decided to take revenge on the hare and said, "Although you can run quickly, I can defeat you in a race". Laughing at him, the hare replied, "Alright, let there be a test immediately". On the day the race started, the tortoise began by jumping and going very slowly. The hare went a long distance in one run. After having run for a distance, the hare decided to rest under a tree as he felt that it would take a long time for the tortoise to catch up to him. Resting in the cool wind that was blowing, the hare soon fell asleep. The tortoise was walking very slowly, but he did not stop until he reached the finish. When the hare woke up he started running again, but as he ran towards the finish he saw that the tortoise was already there. The hare was very much ashamed.

TEST III

Ēta obhigota  
(An experience)

1. din moi amar kolezor boha khotalitot  
 One day I our college-r sitting room in  
 batori-kakot porhi asilo / 2. khotalitot keba-sono  
 newspaper reading was / the room-in few-plus  
 lora suali asil / 3. teolok atai-bilak inraiz / 4. moi  
 boy girl were / they all English / I  
 boha thair osorot ezon lora aru ezoni suali  
 sitting place-r nearby a boy and a girl were  
 bohisil / 5. t oloke phisphaskoi kiba alsona korisil  
 sitting / they whispering something discussion did  
 6. moi teolokok lokho kora nasilo / 7. olop pisote  
 I them notice doing was not / little after at emph.  
 moi dekhhilo ze mor osorot boha lora-zon aru suali-zonie  
 I saw that that my nearby sitting the boy and the girl  
 suma khobo dhorise / 8. moi olop hatobhombo hoisilo  
 kiss eat started / I a little embarrassed was  
 karan hadharonota lora sualie tene thait suma  
 because usually boy girl like that place in kiss  
 khuakhui nokore / 9. zodio moi batori-kakotot soku  
 eating do not although I newspaper-in eyes  
 soku rakhisilo asolute moi teolokor kothahe bhabisilo /  
 eyes kept truth in emph. I their word-emph was thinking /  
 10. moi monote honkolpo korisilo ze moi teolokor pine  
 I mind in emph decision did that I their direction  
 nasam / 11. kintu moi kobonuarakoi teolokor dioro  
 shall not look / but I unknowingly-emph their both-r  
 pine saboloi dhorilo / olop pisote moi lokho korilo ze/  
 direction looking started a little after at emph I notice did

13. khotalitor ataibor lora sualie mor pin sai ase  
 that the room all boy girl my direction looking were/  
 14. moi bor lozit halo/ totalike khotalito eri  
 I very ashamed became immediately the room leaving  
 bhahiroloi ahilo/ 15. pisot moi zon bharotie bondhuk  
 outside to came after at I and Indian friend  
 palo/ 16. moi teok ghotonato kolo/ 17. teo hokolo kotha  
 got / I him the incident told / he all word  
 huni kole / 18. tumi ane suma khuakhui adi drisor  
 having heard said you others kiss eating etc. sight-r  
 pine kio lkho kora / 19. ekhon bilat iat szene  
 direction why? notice do / this England here one  
 anzonor goponitak honman kore / 20. teor kotha huni  
 another-r privacy respect does / his word having heard  
 bhal palo / 21. aru tetiar porai moi anor goponiotak  
 good (I) got / and then-r from I other-r privacy  
 honman horiboloi hikilo / 22. eto mor eta danor obhikota/  
 respect doing learned / this me-r a big experience.

### AN EXPERIENCE

One day I was reading newspapers in the Reading Room of the college. In the room there were quite a few boys and girls. They were all English. By my side a boy and a girl were sitting. They were whispering about something. I did not pay attention to them. After a while I noticed that the boy and girl beside me were kissing each other. I was a little embarrassed, because usually people don't kiss one another in a place like that. Although I kept my eyes on the paper, in actual fact I was thinking of them. I decided

that I wouldn't look at them at all, but I then found myself unknowingly looking at them. After a while I noticed that all the boys and girls in the room were looking at me; I was very ashamed. I left the room immediately and thereupon met an Indian friend. I talked to him about the incident. He heard all I had to say about the incident and said to me, "Why do you look at others kissing and things like that?" "This is England, and here one respects another's privacy". I was glad to hear his words and from that very moment I learned to respect others' privacy. This was a big experience for me.

### 8.3 The diagrammatical representation of the analysed text

In this section we have made an attempt to analyse the text III diagrammatically. The analysis is set out as follows. The text is parsed in terms of three grammatical units—sentence, clause and group. The other two units – word and morpheme are skipped. The first horizontal line is devoted to a sentence unit in reading transcription in accordance with the system indicated above. The second horizontal line is devoted to the next lower clause units which manifest in the next higher ranking unit, sentence. A third horizontal line indicates the extent of the group units which constitute the clause structure. Each group unit is indicated by a vertical line drawn immediately beneath it. Thus each sentence structure is parsed into its clause classes and linking elements, and the clause units are in turn parsed into group classes. The group structures are further parsed into constituent elements along the scale of delicacy. The vertical dimension represents the internal structures of the group classes.  $\Sigma$ , K and G stand for sentence, clause and group respectively. Each letter at the left of each line indicates the rank of the unit whose structure is given on that line. No translation is included in this section.

$$\sum K G$$

edin amar boha khotalit batori kakot prohi asilo			
$\alpha$			
A	A	O	P
Ta	$d^p d^g p^a$	mh nh	$p^i v$

$$\sum K G$$

knotalitoŭkebazono iora soali asil			
$\alpha$			
A	S	P	
La hcl pp <sup>n</sup>	mh nubl h	V	

$$\sum K G$$

moi boha thair osorot ezon lora aru ezoni suli bohisil			
$\alpha$			
A	S	P	
R/S clause			
S	P	A	V
$h_{pop}^a$	$d^g p^a$	mh + mh nu el h nu el h	

teoloke phisphaskoi kiba alsona korisil			
$\alpha$			
S	P	O	P
h pro	Discontinuous p	mh l d <sup>p</sup> h	V

moi teolikok lokho kora nasilo			
$\alpha$			
S	O	O	P
h pro	h pro	h	<sup>a</sup> p Neg V

olop pisote moi dekhilo ze mor osorot boha lorazone aru suali sonie suma khbo dhorise					
$\alpha$					
A	S	P	b	S	P
S/m Adv	h pro	V	SE	m La p d <sup>p</sup> d <sup>p</sup> p <sup>a</sup>	h cl em h infi V

moi olop hotobhombo heisilo karon hadharonot lora soalie tene thait suma khuakhui nokore					
$\alpha$					
S	A	P	L	A	O
h pro	s/m Adj	V	Adv	h em d <sup>p</sup> p <sup>n</sup>	<sup>i</sup> p Neg V redu

zodio moi batori kakotot soku rakhisilo asolote moi teolokor koth ahe bhabisilo					
$\alpha$					
S	A	O	P	S	P
H pro	Adv. La	h	V	h pro	V

moi monote honkolpo korisilo ze moi teolokor pine nasam				$\beta$		
$\alpha$				$\beta$		
S	A	O	P	SE	S	A P
h	Adv	h	V		h	$d^p$ Adv Neg V
pro	La em				pron	$d^p$ La

kintu moi kobo norrakore teolokor pine saboloi dhorilo				$\alpha$		
1	S	P discontinuous	A			P
	h	inf Neg p E	$d^p$ adv			inf V
	pro		La			

olop pisote moi lokho korilo ze khotalitor ataibor lora auale mor pine sai ase				$\beta$		
$\alpha$				$\beta$		
A	S	O	P	SE		A P
Adv	h	h	V			$d^p$ La inf V
$d^p$	$l^1$ pp <sup>n</sup>	pro				

moi bor lozit holo			$\alpha$	
S	A	P		
H	s/m Adj	V		

totalike khotalito eri bhahiroloi ahilo				$\alpha$		
A		A	A			P
adv		R/S clause	Adv			V
		O hcl	P <sup>1</sup>			





#### 8.4 The conclusions

As will have been seen above in our analysis of the text III, Halliday's systemic grammar is based on hierarchical framework. For the description of Assamese, the taxonomical hierarchy must be sought not in the descriptions of other languages, but in the clarity or otherwise in the present study. The theory seems to be adequate enough so far in that it has displayed clearly the diverse functions and structural patterns of units, and provided an overall statement of the grammar as a whole. The theory serves well particularly to bring out the common features enjoyed by the various groups, nominal adverbial and verbal. However a few bits seem not to have been accounted for. Interjections and the discontinuous verbal group are examples in point. Interjections may be considered to be context bound minor clauses. The linking elements have been given clause status. For that reason they seriously challenge the validity of the hierarchical framework. The way in which this intricate problem can possibly be solved is that we should emphasize the fact that grammar and phonology are interrelated. The theory should display the interrelationship of the grammatical units as well as the phonological units in one overall pattern. The linking elements therefore need not be carried through the hierarchy in that they extend over more than one grammatical unit.

Although we have not had the time to carry the analysis to cover every aspect of the language, it seems that the theory on the whole has the power to do so. We hope that further work will succeed in describing the language completely from this point of view.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following list includes all the abbreviations used in the analysis of the preceding text together with others used in earlier chapters.

A	Adjunct
Add	Additive
Adj	Adjective
Adv	Adverbials
App	Appositive
Adp	Adverbial Particle
adj p	Adjectival Particle
b	Binder
C	Complement
Cb	Context Bound
Cf	Context Free
cl	Classifier
Con	Container
cor	Correlative
cs	Casal Suffix
D	Dubitative Element
d	Deictic
d <sup>pg</sup>	Genitival Possessive
d <sup>pp</sup>	Genitival Personal Possessive
d <sup>pp</sup>	Deictic Non-Possessive Pronoun
d <sup>d</sup>	Deictic Pronoun
d <sup>p<sub>I</sub></sup>	Deictic Non-Possessive indefinite Pronoun
d <sup>p<sub>I</sub></sup>	Deictic Non-Possessive Pronoun
E	Emphasizer of the Verbal Group
Emp	Emphatic
e	Epithet
em	Emphasizer of the Nominal Adverbial Groups
f	Focus

G	Group
h	Head
In	Interrogative Marker
inf	Infinitive
in-tran	Intransitive
K	Clause
La	Locative Adverbial
LS	Locative Suffix
l	Linker
M	Morpheme
m	Modifier
N	Noun Clause
Neg	Negator
n	Noun Functioning as Adjective/Prehead Nominal
nu	Numeral
O	Object
O <sup>E</sup>	Extensive Object
O <sup>I</sup>	Intensive Object
Op	Operative
o	Ordinative
o <sup>c</sup>	Cardinal Ordinative
o <sup>f</sup>	Fractional Ordinative
P	Predicator
pro	Pronominal Functioning as Head
p <sup>i</sup>	i-suffix participle
p <sup>a</sup>	a-suffix participle
pp	Plural Particles
pp <sup>n</sup>	Postposition
Q	Indirect Object
qua	Quantifier
q	Qualifier/Post Head
R <sub>A</sub>	Relative Adjunct
R <sub>S</sub>	Relative Subject

R/S	Rankshifted
R <sub>0</sub>	Relative Object
rel	Relative
redu	Reduplicative
S	Subject
SE	Sequential Element
s/m	Sub-modifier
Ta	Temporal Adverbial
Th	Themetization
Tran	Transitive
ts	Temporal Suffix
Unem	Unemphatic
V	Verb Class/Nucleas of the Verbal Group/ Lexical Verb Base
W	Word
Σ	Sentence
λ	Linking Element
┌	Grade Verb Concord
α	Free Clause
β	Subordinate Clause
//	Sentence Terminus
∖ / ^	Intonation
±	Optional
+	Linker within the group rank
*	Ungrammatical / non-occurrence of form.

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